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# Rural quilt shop entrepreneurs in Iowa: Pull and push motivations

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**Rural quilt shop entrepreneurs in Iowa: Pull and push motivations**

by

**Jody Aultman**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Apparel Merchandising and Design

Program of Study Committee:  
Sara Marcketti, Major Professor  
Eulanda Sanders  
Fatma Baytar  
Barb Caldwell  
Cindy Gould

The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

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**DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Reynolds and son Tim without whom my dream would never have been fulfilled. I also dedicate this to my parents for believing in me. Mom, you always said you thought I was capable of greater things, I think this is what you meant.

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## ABSTRACT

A 2014 Quilting in America™ study states that there were 16 million active quilters in the United States which represents 4.9% of the US population, spending approximately \$3.76 billion a year on their fiber arts passion. From 2010 to 2014, there was a 5% increase in the value of the amount spent by quilters. The typical quilter in the early twenty-first century is a middle aged, upper class woman seeking leisure activities (Quilters in America, 2014; Stalp, 2007). The Quilters in America™ 2014 survey reported that the typical quilter has been quilting for an average of 20.3 years and spends approximately \$3,296 per year on quilting. Quilters spend money on fabric, thread, books, classes, as well as guilds (Stalp, 2007). The average quilter owns approximately \$13,000 worth of tools and supplies and has a fabric stash valued at approximately \$6,000 (SAQA, 2014). Based on research by Stalp (2007) women who quilt find personal, emotional and artistic fulfillment from the activity.

A semi-structured interview process (Creswell, 2013) was used in this study to explore the topic of quilt shop ownership. Guided questions were used while allowing the owners the freedom to express themselves in their own words. This study used a purposive strategy in choosing the participants to be interviewed (Esterberg, 2002). They were chosen because they were quilt shop owners in rural communities in the state of Iowa. This study utilized a sample of quilt shop owners based on information from the *All Iowa Quilt Shop Hop* (Carpenter, 2016). A search was done on the US Census Bureau website regarding the populations of each city/town listed in the *All Iowa Quilt Shop Hop* periodical. The *All Iowa Shop Hop* is an annual event held June 1 to June 30 (Carpenter, 2016).

By offering rich, thick descriptions of 15 quilt shop owners in rural communities in Iowa, this study presents an in-depth investigation into why these entrepreneurs were pulled or pushed

into opening their shops. The major pull areas that emerged from analysis of the interviews were opportunity, independence, challenge/achievement, and money. The major push reasons that emerged were related to family matters and job related issues and concerns. Most of the quilt shop owners were not just pulled or pushed into entrepreneurship, but rather concurrently pulled by one or more of the factors, and pushed by one or more of the factors.

Quilt shop owners also described their businesses as happy places to visit. During the interviews, they discussed how much happier they were in their current business compared to when they worked for someone else. The three main areas related to happiness that were expressed including, customers, relationships and passion for the shops and the fabrics.

General systems theory provides insight into how the quilt shop owner's happiness is generated. General systems theory is based on relationships of the parts to the whole. There are three elements involved in systems theory: input, throughput, and output (Lovingood & Firebaugh, 1978). The input in this study were the pull factors including opportunity, independence, challenge and achievement, and money, and the push factors included family and job related issues. The throughput would be the quilt shop itself, and the output are the happiness factors including customers, relationships and passion. The feedback loop goes from the happiness of the quilt shop owners back to the pull and push factors of entrepreneurship.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

A 2014 Quilting in America™ study found that there were 16 million active quilters in the United States which represents 4.9% of the US population, spending approximately \$3.76 billion a year on their fiber arts passion. From 2010 to 2014, there was a 5% increase in the value of the amount spent by quilters. The typical quilter in the early twenty-first century is a middle aged, upper class woman seeking leisure activities (Quilters in America, 2014; Stalp, 2007). The Quilters in America™ 2014 survey reported that the typical quilter has been quilting for an average of 20.3 years and spends approximately \$3,296 per year on quilting. Quilters spend money on fabric, thread, books, classes, as well as guilds (Stalp, 2007). The average quilter owns approximately \$13,000 worth of tools and supplies and has a fabric stash valued at approximately \$6,000 (SAQA, 2014). Based on research by Stalp (2007) women who quilt find personal, emotional and artistic fulfillment from the activity.

In addition to big box retailers such as Walmart, and specialty large retailers such as Joanne Fabrics and Hobby Lobby, that may carry quilting fabrics, many quilters purchase their goods from small businesses. Small businesses fill the need for supplies when products and services cannot be obtained through standard retail outlets (Soldressen, Fiorito, & He, 1998). The Small Business Association (SBA) (2016), reported that there are 28 million small businesses which account for 54% of all US sales. These small businesses provide employment to around 8 million people. Since 1982, the number of small businesses has grown an increase of 49% while large corporations are downsizing (SBA, 2017). Quilt shops in small rural communities can help fill the needs of the quilter.

A rural community can be defined as relating to the country, country people or life in the country (Merriam-Webster, 2017). A rural community has a population of less than 2,500 residents with less than 500 residents per square mile (USDA, 2017). Life in a rural community is different than in an urban area or city setting. The challenges facing rural communities range from declining population, lack of social services, school closings, and lack of job opportunities (Procter, 2005). Research suggests an avenue for rebuilding rural communities is the use of small businesses (Luther & Wall, 1998). Rural entrepreneurs can be motivated by the lack of employment opportunities in their communities and set out to open new businesses to help themselves as well as the community (Besser & Miller, 2013a). The variety of businesses in a rural community can help to attract residents and tourists to these towns (Frazier, et al., 2013; Kilkenny, Nalbarte, & Besser, 1999). A critical component of successful rural communities is creating an atmosphere of charm and attractiveness to attract and retain businesses and customers (Frazier, et al., 2013; Hurst & Niehm, 2012). This will help keep money circulating within the small community, ensuring their livelihood and continuation (Frazier, et al., 2013).

There are no statistics on the number of quilt shops in the state of Iowa or nationally because the US Census Bureau groups quilt shops into one category along with craft, knitting, and yarn shops in one category. This pool includes large markets such as JoAnn Fabrics, Hobby Lobby and Walmart.

However, the *All Iowa Quilt Shop Hop*, which is an annual event in the state of Iowa, listed 111 quilt shops participating in 2016 (Carpenter, 2016). The quilt shop owners pay a nominal fee to be a part of the quilt shop hop which provides an inexpensive tool for advertising and marketing for the quilt shop owners. The quilt shop hop consists of customers obtaining passports online, and visiting the shops in the month of June. The customers can visit shops in

any region or all of the shops if they want. Customers receive gifts from each participating quilt shop they visit and have their passports stamped. When the customers' passports are full by region, they are eligible for prizes. The quilt shops listed in the quilt shop hop are located throughout the state of Iowa in a wide variety of communities irrespective of size and population.

The state of Iowa has 490 rural communities with a population of less than 1,500 residents (City-Data, 2014). Of those communities, according to the *All Iowa Quilt Shop Hop* website, there are 20 Iowa communities with quilt shops that fit these criteria. The researcher identified 15 quilt shop owners who agreed to participate in this study. I noted when I visited the communities and spoke with the entrepreneurs, that each of the towns were rural with limited infrastructure, and not a great deal of commerce. The shops were located in a variety of places including main street, a town square, a home and a building outside of town. Because quilting is such an important hobby and business venture, it is imperative to study the reasons entrepreneurs may start the venture, particularly in small, rural communities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Throughout time and history there has been an ongoing argument as to whether quilting should be considered a craft or art. This author believes that quilting can be considered to be either utilitarian, artistic, or both. To a quilter, it means so much to be able to create a piece of art for their loved ones. The love of quilting reaches across urban and rural populations. Many businesses have a vision to meet this need. The researcher has a deep passion for quilting and has visited many quilt shops in her life. Many of these quilt shops, whether urban or rural, seem to have very few customers during a visit. The researcher is interested in how quilt shop owners start and maintain their business in small rural communities in Iowa.

## **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation consists of six chapters, and supporting appendices. Chapter one provides an overview of the quilting study, the purpose of the study, the research questions and definition of terms used. Chapter two presents a review of the literature, focused within the areas of historical context of quilting, types of quilts, purpose of quilts, and family dynamics. This chapter also includes literature on quilt shop entrepreneurs based on the pull and push aspects of entrepreneurship and investigations into happiness of quilt shop owners. Chapter three illustrates the research methods selection of participants, instrument, study protocols, data collection process, credibility of the researcher and methods of analysis. The emerging themes are discussed in chapter four. Chapter five will be discussion. Conclusions, implications, limitations, further research and recommendations to quilt shop entrepreneurs in rural Iowa communities are discussed in chapter six. Documents such as IRB approval from Iowa State University, informed consent forms and open ended interview questions are located in the appendix.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do quilt shop entrepreneurs maintain their businesses in small, rural communities in the state of Iowa?
2. What pull and push factors motivated quilt shop entrepreneurs in these small, rural communities to start and continue their enterprise?
3. What elements of quilt shop ownership provide happiness to the entrepreneurs?

## **Definition of Terms**

1. **Quilt:** Merriam-Webster (2017) defines a quilt as a bed covering or art piece consisting of 3 layers: the quilt top, batting, and a backing all held in place by lines of hand or machine stitching.

2. **Traditional Quilting:** Traditional quilts are created using available fabrics of the time with old, familiar and popular patterns (Crain, 2017).
3. **Contemporary Quilting:** Contemporary quilters stretch the boundaries of traditional quilts by altering traditional patterns, as well as using contemporary fabrics such as bright, bold fabrics or creating their own fabric (Crain, 2017).
4. **Art Quilting:** Art quilts are currently being made using many different techniques as well as objects that can be added to the quilts such as buttons, beads, paint, leather, glass carvings, felt, yarns, embroidery floss, dyed dryer lint, etc. (Shaw, 2009).
5. **Modern Quilting:** Modern quilts are defined as primarily functional but inspired by modern designs, they differ from art quilts in their functionality (MQG, 2017).
6. **Amateur quilters:** Participate in the activity of quilting for leisure reasons and do not support themselves with their hobby (Stalp & Conti, 2011).
7. **Professional Quilter:** A professional quilter would be a quilter that makes a living off their quilting skills such as quilt instructors and/or quilt shop owners (Stalp & Conti, 2011).
8. **Patchwork quilts:** Quilts that are created made with small pieces of cloth in different colors and designs sewn together (Seward, 2014).
9. **Applique:** Applique is done using needle work to attach pieces of fabric to a larger piece of fabric to form a picture or pattern (Seward, 2014).
10. **Yard Goods:** Merriam-Webster (2017) defines yard goods as fabric bought by the yard ready for sewing.
11. **Quilt Top:** The top of the quilt on which the piecing or applique takes place (Seward, 2014).



12. **Self-Healing Mat:** A mat used to cut fabrics using an acrylic ruler and rotary cutter (Seward, 2014).
13. **Acrylic Ruler:** A hard plastic, clear ruler used in the cutting of fabric for quilting (Seward, 2014).
14. **Rotary Cutter:** A circular blade that glides along the edge of the acrylic ruler to cut fabric for quilting (Seward, 2014).
15. **Long Arm Quilting:** A machine that holds the fabric in place, and the quilter moves the sewing machine to create the stitches in the cloth to hold the quilt together (Seward, 2014).
16. **Hobby:** Dictionary.com (2017) defines hobby as a serious leisure pursuit that is interesting and enjoyable by the participants.
17. **Social Capital:** The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000).
18. **Entrepreneurship:** The activity of setting up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit (Carree & Verheul, 2011).
19. **Small Business:** Small businesses are generally privately owned corporations, partnerships, or sole proprietorships. Small businesses can also be classified as sales, assets, or net profits (Soldressen, Fiorito, & He, 1998).
20. **Rural Community:** Relating to the country, country people or life in the country (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

21. **Niche Markets:** A niche market can be defined as a small market, geared towards individual customers that have similar needs. A key component of niche markets is specialization in one area (Dalgig & Leeuw, 1994; Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006).
22. **Destination Shop:** A place that sells an exclusive product that shoppers are willing to seek out. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017)

## CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Overview

This study was designed to explore selected themes related to the entrepreneurship of quilt shop owners. Several components were considered while analyzing the themes. The literature analyzed has been divided into two major sections including:

#### Part I Facets of Quilting

- Historical Context of Quilting in the United States
- Types of Quilts
- Technical Processes
- Purpose of Quilts and Quilting
- Quilting as a Fine Art
  - Quilters of Gee's Bend
- Family Dynamics

#### Part II Entrepreneurship

- Entrepreneurship
- Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs
  - Niche Markets
  - Practicing Quilt Shop Owners
- Entrepreneurship Strategies
- Social Capital
- Relationship Marketing
- Happiness and Entrepreneurship
- Pull vs Push Reasons for Entrepreneurship
  - Pull Factors
  - Push Factors

Each of these factors is discussed within this chapter.

### Part I: Facets of Quilting

#### Historic Context of Quilting in the United States

The word *quilt* is derived from the Latin word *culcita* which means a padded mattress tied together with string (Johnson, 2016). Quilting is a technique involving two layers of fabric

with a layer of batting in the middle, and stitched together with yarn or thread by hand or machine (Peck, 2004).

Quilts and quilting were brought to Europe from the Middle East in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century (Johnson, 2016). The quilted garments were used under armor as padding. Eventually, the use of the quilted garment alone became a fashion item adopted by both the wealthy and bourgeoisie classes (Tortora & Marcketti, 2015).

Quilting skills were brought to the Americas in the 15<sup>th</sup> century from Europe, but it is not known if the quilts themselves survived the journey (Johnson, 2016). Quilts were high priced items as the cost of importing the fabrics from England was high (Listening to Herstory, 2016). The quilts that were saved from the early years of America often belonged to wealthy families. Typically, these quilts were of considerable value because of their textile materials or because they had a specific ceremonial significance (Kiracofe, 1993).

In Colonial America, quilting was done by all women wealthy or poor, and provided a way to showcase artistry and crafting skills (Peck, 2004). Before the industrial revolution, women took on the tasks associated with textiles such as spinning and weaving cloth, sewing garments and household linens and bed quilts which were necessary to decorate their homes and keep the family warm (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber 1987). Quilts were created by hand and the techniques were passed down from mother to daughter. The quilts were used to warm their beds, line their walls for warmth, and cover the doorways to shut out the cold (Shaw, 2009). In addition, quilts were given as gifts, including as valuable additions to their daughter's dowries (Shaw, 2009).

As the industrial revolution progressed, the roles of women changed with many of their domestic chores being done in the factories for low wages (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987).

Sewing was still encouraged for women but had changed for some, particularly middle to upper class women as more of a creative hobby rather than out of necessity (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987). If done for artistic reasons, it was often more ornamental in nature and could express a woman's tastes (Behuniak-Long, 1994). Rather than valuing it solely for its artistic and functional purposes, sewing was believed to have taught the women and children patience, repetition, and routine (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987). The sewing machine invented in the middle 1800s freed some time from hand stitching of the quilts to allow for greater ornamentation upon the quilts (Berlo, et al., 2003; Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987).

Around the turn of the twentieth century the popularity of quilting waned in the United States because it was thought by some to be an old-fashioned art, something grandmothers did and not for the modern young woman (Berlo, et al., 2003). By the start of the First World War homemakers were encouraged by the government to create their own quilts as bedcovers to save the manufactured blankets for the American soldiers overseas (Kiracofe, 1993). This breathed new life into quilting, and the start of quilting as an art form.

In the early 1920s pre-made quilt patterns and precut quilt kits became very popular. They were said to help women with every aspect of their quilt making: designing, constructing and finishing the project (Hanson & Crews, 2009). Precut quilt kits and patterns have remained popular today. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City dedicated a wing to the arts and crafts movement in 1924 (Kiracofe, 1993). Around the same time, *Ladies Home Journal* was the first publication to recognize quilts as artistic objects (Kiracofe, 1993). Quilt shows were started around the mid-1920s with great participation from quilters around the country. Many quilts of this era consisted of patchwork and patterns from just a few designers. Some women were happy to create their quilts from patterns that they received in the magazines, but there

were still some women that continued to create their own designs (Hanson & Crews, 2009; Kiracofe, 1993).

A small quilt revival came about during the great depression in the 1930s. The women of the time who were out of work, underemployed, or stayed at home, found quilting a good use of time and a way to use fabric and materials they already had (Kiracofe, 1993; Orlofsky & Orlofsky, 1974). The quilts that were created in the 1930s were very similar in pattern and design because there were very few choices of fabrics and little money for purchasing. Stores were stocked with merchandise, but with little money, the people in the 1930s had a making-do and mend attitude (Maginnis, 1992).

World War II helped bring people out of the depression. Women left their homes in great numbers to work in the factories, taking the place of the men who had gone off to war (Kiracofe, 1993). During the War, a great deal of income became available to spend on consumer goods (Maginnis, 1992), but quilting was not as popular because people were busy with the war efforts. Quilt making slowed somewhat, but women needed something to pass the time and found quilting could occupy their evenings. At the end of the war, quilt making took a downward turn as women stayed in the workforce and they had little time to devote to quilt making (Kiracofe, 1993). Although quilt making did not die out in America after the war, there was not as much interest in quilting during the 1950s and 1960s (Crews & Rich, 1995). This is attributable to unappealing fabric choices such as polyester and double knits, drab colors, and unflattering designs (Listening to Herstory, 2016).

Quilting regained popularity in the 1970s when there was a national revival around the bi-centennial of the United States (Behuniak-Long, 1994; Crews & Rich, 1995; Listening to Herstory, 2016; Stalp, 2007). As reported by Berlo, et al., (2003) there are two eras that have

been a very important narrative in the quilts made by American women. The first occurrence was during the centennial year of 1876, and the second occurrence was in the 1970s, around the time of the bicentennial celebration. Around this time the fabric manufacturers were creating beautiful cottons with nice patterns and colors (Listening to Herstory, 2016). This coincided with the second wave of feminism when women gained greater notice in the art world for their textile arts (Berlo, et al., 2003). Quilting became an avenue for women to have a voice in the artistic genres (Berlo, et al., 2003).

In the 1980s, granddaughters began to revive an interest in quilting with guidance from their grandmothers (Quilting in America, 2014). During that time there was a back to the land movement which generated a desire to learn more hand skills that had been forgotten due to the post war use of automation (Quilting in America, 2014). Quilting grew in popularity in the 1990s where young women and men as well as the older quilters took up quilting as a leisure activity (Speaking of Quilts, 2017). Fabrics and patterns were specially designed for the quilter and the activity flourished (Speaking of Quilts, 2017).

Quilting has changed by the introduction of technology including online social groups. For example, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Modern Quilt Group was started online with a mission to encourage modern quilting through education, art and community (MQG, 2017). Local groups were started around the world providing quilters the opportunity to meet in person. Modern quilts are defined as primarily functional but inspired by modern designs, they differ from art quilts in their functionality (MQG, 2017). Characteristics of modern quilts include minimalism, with extensive negative space, bold colors and prints, and high contrasting fabrics (MQG, 2017).

Currently in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, quilting is practiced as it always was, but more for relaxation than out of necessity (Quilting in America, 2014). Some quilters follow the tried and

traditional aspects of quilting for their own leisure time, while others are seeing quilting as art and manipulate the fabrics to create their own unique styles (Quilting in America, 2014).

### **Types of Quilts**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, a popular style of quilting was a whole cloth quilt, which consisted of two layers of fabric plus batting in the middle (Orlofsky & Orlofsky, 1974; Peck, 2004). The cloth was generally plain or had minimal design on it, and the quilter then added the character to the quilt through their stitching. They were made of silks and wools, and were the most popular type of quilt of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Peck, 2004). This method was used extensively in the early 1800s (Berlo, et al., 2003; Peck, 2004).

Around 1840 women started creating their own style of quilts with the newly available fabrics and the Baltimore Album quilt was born. This type of quilt was created in two different ways. The first was to create blocks called applique or laid work, and the second was to purchase preprinted blocks cut from yardage of fabric (Berlo, et al., 2003). In the quilt, the types of blocks were alternated to form the quilt (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987).

Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, (1987) stated that, signature quilts and friendship quilts became very popular at this time. The women would create their quilts leaving plain colored blocks, usually white, so that others could sign the quilts for them. This became very popular after the Civil War during the time of expansion westward and women had to prepare for the trip (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987). Friends gathered to complete the quilts and socialize before someone left town (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987; Listening to Herstory, 2016). The finished quilts provided an emotional connection to home and provided much needed warmth during the trips west (Kiracofe, 1993).



Another type of quilt made popular in the late 1800s was the crazy quilt (Figure 4). This type of quilt was created using expensive fabric scraps such as silks and velvets. The crazy quilt is created by piecing different sizes and shapes of scrap fabrics together, which are then embellished with gold trim and threads (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987). The quilts were a way for women to express themselves artistically as well as to be used for political statements and storytelling (Berlo, et al., 2003; Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987).

The late nineteenth century brought more complex patterns due to the invention of the sewing machine which made quilt making faster to complete and easier (Hanson & Crews, 2009; Kiracofe, 1993). The log cabin quilt became popular with bold new colors and designs (Hanson & Crews, 2009). The log cabin quilt was created using strips of fabric usually in light and dark colors, sewn together in blocks and the blocks were pieced together to form a design. Women were using cottons, silks, and wools to create their quilts. The fabrics used reflected the prosperity of the quilt maker (Berlo, et al., 2003). Women in the early twentieth century were designing and developing different quilt patterns to use in their quilting. Patterns using stars, flying geese, nine patch, hexagons, amongst many others, became popular throughout the years (Hanson & Crews, 2009). These patterns are still used today by quilters with many abstractions made to the original or traditional patterns.

### **Technical Processes**

The technical process of quilting has changed drastically since the industrial revolution. Women no longer had to do needlework, but they continued to do so and were free to create their own history and art in their own way (Behuniak-Long, 1994). There are different ways to create a quilt top: traditional piecing, strip piecing, and applique are three very popular methods (Shaw, 2009). Traditional piecing can be done using a template and drawing the pattern out on the

fabric. A much easier way is to use a rotary cutter, self-healing mat and an acrylic ruler, especially if cutting strips or shapes out of the fabric. This can be done quickly and easily giving the quilter more time for stitching the shapes together. Strip piecing is a method used to stitch many rows together at one time, then cutting the strips into manageable pieces and re stitching them to get different variations of fabric stitched together quickly. Applique is a popular method of quilting story quilts and different shapes and sizes onto a piece of fabric (Berlo, et al., 2003). The main technique involves cutting the shapes out of one fabric and place them on top of another fabric where they will be hand stitched down or machine stitched to create the applique. The advent of sewing machines made the quilters work much easier because they no longer had to do everything by hand.

Fabric selection is an important technical process for quilters. Quilters can choose commercially printed fabrics or create their own through hand dyeing or digital printing. Hand dyeing is a time-consuming process that can produce colors that are rich and vibrant (Mori, 1998). Care should be taken when creating the formula for the dyes for reproducibility if more fabrics are needed (Mori, 1998). Digitally printed fabrics provide another way to get one-of-a-kind fabrics for art quilts. This process requires the use of computer software such as Adobe Creative Suites Photo Shop or Illustrator to create the design that will be printed on a wide scale digital printer (Bowles & Isaac, 2012). This technique gives the quilter the option to create whole cloth designs that would then be ready for quilting. Quilting methods are important to think about when designing the quilt.

Quilting can be done by hand which is very time consuming and difficult, the tiny stitches must go through all layers of the quilt (Eddy, 2005). Quilting can also be done by home sewing machine which works very well for small quilts and wall hangings, but is very difficult

for large quilts (Eddy, 2005). As time and technologies progressed into the late twentieth century, long arm quilting machines became popular. They have become even more popular today. The machines can hold up to a 120-inch-wide quilt making it more efficient than using a home machine to quilt the three layers together (Bernina, 2017). The quilt top, batting and backing are loaded into the machine, and it assists with the quilting for you (Bernina, 2017). Some long arm machines must be “driven” by the quilter using free motion stitching or using a template to get the design on the quilt. There are also electronic long arm quilting machines that follow a pattern from the computer and stitch unattended (Bernina, 2017). This makes the process much quicker, and the quilting can be done in hours, as opposed to days or weeks.

### **Purpose of Quilts and Quilting**

Quilts have been made for many different reasons throughout the years (Johnson & Wilson, 2005). During the 19th century, quilting served as a much-needed creative outlet for women and quilting groups were formed for women to discuss political, social, medical and religious topics (Kiracofe, 1993; Shaw, 2009). These groups have been called by different names such as: quilting bee (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987; Shaw, 2009), sewing circle, and quilt frolic (Berlo, et al., 2003), and more recently, quilt guilds. No matter what they were called, they served as socially acceptable places for women to gather with their peers to discuss the latest quilting patterns, work together to finish their quilts, and join as a community (Johnson, 2016). These groups were also used to create quilts for the war efforts through time by raising funds and donating quilts to the soldiers during the war (Kiracofe, 1993). By the end of the nineteenth century quilting, bees were disappearing as more women were entering the work force and had less time to quilt with other women (Ferrero, Hedges, & Silber, 1987).

Many quilts contain personal stories such as memory quilts or quilts created from a loved one's clothing after they have died (Peterson, 2003). Quilts were made during Civil War times for the soldiers and in remembrance of the soldiers (Kiracofe, 1993). Quilts were also made during World War I and World War II to fund raise for the troops and provide warmth for the troops (Kiracofe, 1993; Listening to Herstory, 2016). Quilts have been made for fundraising purposes throughout history leading up to today (Peterson, 2003). Quilts have also served as a medium for social activation or political expression. Examples include the AIDS Memorial Quilt, United in Memory 9/11 Victim's Memorial Quilt, Quilts of Honor, and Project Linus.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt was conceived by gay activist Cleve Jones in 1985 (Fee, 2006). Jones and other activists were planning a memorial site for those who had died of AIDS and created the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial quilt (Fee, 2006). The panels of the quilt are 3 feet by 6 feet and were created by family and friends to honor someone who died from the disease. The first time the quilt was displayed was on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in 1987 (Fee, 2006). The quilt was displayed in the same manner for subsequent years after the first display in 1987. The quilt is very empowering for those who have seen it due, in part, to its extremely large size.

Corey Gammel, CEO and founder of United in Memory, wanted to do something for the people lost on 9/11 to commemorate their lives (Gammel, 2001). This led to the United in Memory 9/11 Victims Memorial Quilt Exhibit in September 2006 (Gammel, 2001). The quilt was made by 3000 volunteers from 17 countries, measuring 16,000 feet in length. There was one large block created for each victim of the attack (Anonymous 2006). Most of the quilt is now stored in the quilt center of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's International Quilt Study Center & Museum (Ursch, 2016).

The Quilts of Honor was created as a token of thanks and remembrance to the many men and women who have served in our armed services (Belmont, 2016). The quilts are made by volunteer quilting groups throughout the country (Belmont, 2016). This is a quilter's way of showing their appreciation to those who serve our country to protect our freedoms (Belmont, 2016). The quilts have been displayed in quilt shows in the United States for promotional purposes (Belmont, 2016). The quilts are distributed to service men and their families from participating quilt shops and organizations throughout the nation.

Project Linus was started in 1998 and has local chapters in all 50 states (Babbitt, 2016). The organization was set up to ensure that children in hospitals, shelters, or social service agencies could receive a "hug" in the form of a quilt or blanket of their own (Babbitt, 2016). The project has continued to flourish and volunteers donate the needed blankets to children around the country. There have been over 6 million blankets received by children since the inception of Project Linus (Babbitt, 2016).

### **Quilting as a Fine Art**

The term art quilting was first coined in the late 1960s to early 1970s. The idea that quilt makers could be artists was a notion highlighted by Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoff in a 1971 exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art called "Abstract Designs in American Quilts" (Behuniak-Long, 1994; Shaw, 1997). Many artists that were academically trained have had a hard time accepting quilting as an art, but were drawn to the rich colors and bold graphics (Shaw, 1997). The idea of quilts as art has become a creative focus of many artists worldwide. They have found new ways to take the concept of the traditional bed quilt and creatively transform it in their studios into a piece of art that will hang on the wall. These quilts are

intentionally created to be nonfunctional and in most cases, are not washable like a typical or conventional bed quilt.

These types of art quilts received the official title of “art quilt” in the mid-1980s and was attached to the studio work done by these quilting artists. Many academics and lay people had trouble with the term because when they think of a quilt, they think of warm, cozy, soft objects that are to be used and not necessarily displayed (Shaw, 2009). Many quilting artists have tried to distance themselves from the typical quilter by calling their work “studio quilts” or “nontraditional quilts” (Shaw, 2009).

**Quilters of Gee’s Bend.** The quilters of Gee’s Bend, living in Wilcox County at the bend of the Alabama River in Alabama were discovered by Will Arnett owner of the Tinwood Alliance in 1993. The Gee’s Bend quilters lived in a small community of about seven hundred black men, women and children. The group was secluded by the river and the area was very depressed and poor. The quilters used whatever they could find to create one of a kind quilts. They used old clothes, old quilts, flour sacks, seed sacks, and even created their own batting by hand beating the left-over cottons from the nearby mills (Chave, 2008). The quilter’s piecework was done all by hand because they did not have electricity in the area.

A priest named Father Francis X. Walter, who saw some of the quilts hanging on a clothesline across the river in Gee’s Bend was very impressed with them. He collected the quilts from the quilt makers and had them sent to New York to be auctioned off to help raise money for the local people (Tinwood, 2013).

Tinwood Alliance, an organization founded by William Arnett discovered the quilts of Gee’s Bend through a photo taken by Roland Freeman in 1993 (Tinwood, 2013). The photo showed Annie Mae Young and with her granddaughter, standing by a pile of homemade quilts

(Tinwood, 2013). Arnett subsequently met with women of the area and purchased over five hundred quilts from the quilters of Gee's Bend. Arnett had them authenticated and sent the images to art and quilting experts to verify the work (Tinwood, 2013). The quilts were exhibited at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and the Whitney Museum in 2002 (Sohan, 2015).

Two contemporary American artists that are pioneers in art quilting are Nancy Crow and Michael James (Lenkowsky, 2008). Crow obtained a MFA in weaving and ceramics, but decided in the 1970's that quilt making was the medium she wished to pursue (Lenkowsky, 2008). Crow (2015) stated on her website that the purpose of her quilts was to make something aesthetically beautiful and at the same time express her feelings and life experiences. Crow lives on a farm outside Columbus, OH, where she continues her art quilting. She says that she loves working in her studio and becoming one with her quilts (Crow, 2015).

Michael James obtained his Masters of Fine Arts at the School for American Crafts which was a part of the art college at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where his studio disciplines were painting and ceramics (Lenkowsky, 2008). Upon graduation, he considered quilting which led him into art quilting. James work consists of using many different colored stripes of fabric in diagonal directions using many curves and other geometric shapes (James, 1998; Shaw, 2009). James quilts by stitching in the ditch which is a process of stitching on the seam lines so that his surface remains smooth and unbroken (Shaw, 2009). The 1990s brought a change for James where he goes beyond the quilting grid and uses a freeform method that produces graffiti like quilts (James, 1998; Shaw, 2009).

Attitudes towards cloth and fiber changed in the 1960s and many new fabric styles were developed to keep up with these changes (Shaw, 1997). Modern artists were taking notice of the new fabrics available and were looking to art quilting as a way to express themselves. These

artists needed a new place to display their work so they set out to create the first Quilt National that was held in 1979 in Athens, OH (Shaw, 2009). There were 55 quilts shown by many quilt artists with Michael James as juror (Shaw, 2009). This show is still held in Athens, OH, bi-annually, as well as many other venues displaying traditional, contemporary, and art quilts.

Art quilts are currently made using many different techniques as well as objects that can be added to the quilt tops such as buttons, beads, paint, leather, glass carvings, felt, yarns, embroidery floss, dyed dryer lint, etc. (Shaw, 2009). Although quilters are using many different items to embellish their quilts, fabric was always the primary medium for their art quilts.

### **Family Dynamics**

Women can spend a great deal of their lives taking care of the household and their families, leaving very little time for their own leisure activities (Stalp, 2007). Even though changes have made paid work and careers outside of the home the norm, the expectation remains that women are the primary family caregivers (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). The expectation of caring for the family can be exhausting for women and can limit women's leisure time activities (Stalp, 2006a). When women reach their forties, their focus can shift from the much-needed caregiver when their families were younger, to focus on their own leisure activities (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). At this point in life some women find enjoyment and fulfillment in quilting (Stalp, 2006b).

Women have described quilting as a way to bring joy to themselves and fulfillment by doing something for themselves and others (Stalp, 2006a). They quilt for family and friends which strengthens the bonds by giving their quilts as gifts. The leisure activity of quilting creates beneficial aspects for women other than the quilting itself. Women can find calmness and focus while quilting and may even enter a flow-like state apart from their daily activities such as



housework (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). They feel a personal accomplishment while quilting which compares to having alone time such as during a bubble bath (Stalp, 2006a). Often, the quilting is done for their own leisure and is not meant to be hanging in a gallery or used to generate income for the family (Stalp, 2006a).

## **Part II: Entrepreneurship**

### **Entrepreneurship**

Small business ownership for women is gaining strength in the global economy and growing faster for women than for their male counterparts (Hodges, et. al., 2015; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Women entrepreneurs face three major challenges when starting up their own business: financial support, social resources, and work/family considerations (Hodges, et al., 2015; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Soldressen, Fiorito, & He, 1998). Women often have a more difficult time obtaining financial support as compared to their male counterparts because statistically women owned businesses fail more often, which is due in part to the inability to receive the funds needed at start up (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Miller, Besser & Vigna, 2011). Social resources become very important in starting and maintaining a business. All entrepreneurs need assistance such as mentoring, networking and professional development (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Orhan & Scott, 2001). Many women in rural areas think that they lack the educational skills such as budgeting and financial planning that are necessary to keep a business up and running and do not know where to turn for these types of assistance (Ahl, 2006; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). If women have access to social networks, they tend to have better experiences with opening and running their business (Besser & Miller, 2013b; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Work/family concerns are much greater for women than men, and this is what holds some women back from wanting to start their own business (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007;

Orhan & Scott, 2001). Women that do decide to start their own business do so with the family income generation in mind as well as to try to achieve success for themselves while taking care of the family (Ahl, 2006; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007).

Studies have shown that the decision to start a business is much more difficult for women because women are much more sensitive to non-monetary issues, such as family dynamics, when looking into business startup (Ahl, 2006; Brush, Bruin & Welter, 2009; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). In a study done by Langowitz & Minniti (2007) self confidence in one's own skill set, as well as other social aspects, are crucial characteristics needed for women as well as men when starting up a small business. Role models, which can come in the form of other entrepreneurs, are very important to look at when starting up a business, and which helps reduce the ambiguity of the business world (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Women's perceptions and behaviors are found to be key in helping them start up their own business and keep the business growing to enhance well-being at the community level which is important for growth of the business (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Marcketti, Niehm & Fuloria, 2006).

### **Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs**

**Niche Markets.** Quilt shops serve as a form of niche business. A niche market can be defined as a small market, geared towards individual customers that have similar needs. A key component of niche markets is specialization in one area (Dalgig & Leeuw, 1994; Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). In a niche market, the product sold is important, however, so is good service, word of mouth advertising and the personal image of the owner (McKenna, 1988). Niche markets contain the following characteristics: customers have distinct needs, are willing to pay a premium price, and have the potential for growth (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006).

Important factors in a niche market are relationships and reputation (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). Niche marketing is driven by word of mouth advertising which is important to market the business (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). As reported by Dalgig and Leeuw (1994), important components in a niche market are positioning, profitability, distinctive competencies, market segment and adhering to the market concept. Positioning refers to the success of the entrepreneur to put their business in the best location possible to successfully sell their specific products. Distinctive competencies refer to the ability to carry the goods and services needed by a specific niche to provide for their customers. Adhering to market concepts includes knowing the product sold and marketing it well (Dalgig and Leeuw, 1994).

The supply of goods can change much faster in a niche market than a large competitor, which can result in greater customer loyalty for the niche business (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). Successful niche market owners have a good reputation and provide excellent customer service to their customers and are always working to improve customer service by making available the products that the customer needs (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). Niche markets can capitalize on strong customer relationships (Dalgig & Leeuw, 1994). This helps to enable the market owner to have a higher price point on their unique items they carry within their markets (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). Niche businesses identify the unique segments of a market and not the entire industry (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006). It is very important that a niche market not be too small because it will not profit or too large that they lose their uniqueness and customer base (Parrish, Cassill, & Oxenham, 2006).

**Practicing Quilt Shop Owners.** Within the realm of quilt shop entrepreneurs, the focus of the literature seems to be within the popular press, rather than the scholarly press realm. These articles tend to focus on personal achievement and struggles, as well as highlighting small

businesses within geographic regions (Carlton, 2014). Quilting periodicals such as *Quilting Arts Magazine*, *American Quilter*, and *American Patchwork and Quilting* have showcased quilt shops throughout the US. Locally, quilters have relied on the *Country Register* which is a free periodical established in 1988 which is now available in all states and Canada (Floyd, 2013). Small business owners often use the *Country Register* to advertise their offerings to consumers.

There are very few research studies regarding the experiences of the quilt shop entrepreneur. However, within the popular press there are several examples, which include: Jennie Doan from the rural community of Hamilton, MO, who was looking for something to do in her spare time and turned to quilting in 1997 (Carlton, 2014). Her family bought her a long arm quilt machine and a building to house it in and from that, her business was started. With the assistance of her son, she created YouTube videos and posted simplified methods of her quilting skills online (Carlton, 2014). Doan's, You Tube videos were extremely popular which led her to begin selling fabrics and eventually she opened her own brick and mortar quilt shop, the *Missouri Star Quilt Co* (Carlton, 2014). Since her opening in 2008, she and her family have turned the community of Hamilton, MO into a theme town with 11 quilt shops and businesses. A theme town is defined as a town that creates a theme based on a certain business or group of businesses to enhance tourism (Engler, 1993).

Kalona, IA is known as the "Quilt Capital of Iowa," home to a large community of Amish and Mennonites with a Historical Village that takes you on a journey through life in the 1800s (City of Kalona, 2017). Within the village, there is the Kalona Quilt and Textile Museum which houses quilts made by the Amish and English from the Midwest and other areas. The community boasts the most quilt shops in one rural community in the state with four stores selling fabric and other materials for quilting (City of Kalona, 2017).

The Amish of Lancaster County, PA are well known for their quilting skills as well as their quilt shops (Cheek & Piercy, 2004). Historically, starting in the late 1800s, the home based quilting business grew out of necessity to help the family by bringing in extra money. Although the money was good for the families, the shops also provided opportunities for personal growth, particularly to teach and mentor the young (Cheek & Piercy, 2004). The continuity of preserving the family and community traditions are additional reasons quilting is important to the Amish of Pennsylvania (Cheek & Piercy, 2004).

### **Entrepreneurship Strategies**

Small businesses fill the need when products and services cannot be obtained through mass marketing (Soldressen, Fiorito, & He, 1998). Many women with families entered small business ownership with the general knowledge that it would enhance their flexibility making them more able to handle the everyday needs of their families (Hodges et al., 2015). This is far from the truth as small business ownership is both very time consuming, and women tend to take the work home with them at the end of the day (Hodges et al., 2015). Women entrepreneurs do not receive the funding that is generally allotted to men in starting their own businesses, therefore they must be resourceful and use their skills to maintain and grow their business. Women are likely to be more creative in doing more with less such as advertising through word of mouth and not spending a great deal of money on external sources for advertising. They also often spend time learning what it takes to grow their business (Hodges, et al., 2015).

### **Social Capital**

Historically, men have had many advantages over women in the business world including, higher pay, higher status, and higher rates of self-employment. Since the 1970s, women have had a surge in small business ownership, but men still seem to have more

networking opportunities giving them an advantage over women (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000).

Social capital of men and women varies greatly as seen in the ties they are associated with; women tend to discuss business with family members and men are more likely to discuss business with colleagues and other small business owners (Miller, Besser & Vigna, 2011; Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). These network connections are paramount in the type of information about resources and opportunities that are available in growing the business (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000; Zhao, Ritchie & Echtner, 2011). Gender differences in network choices can reveal a great disadvantage for women because if they choose family as their network, they are getting more social support, but at a cost of sacrificing diversity from outside sources of information for their business (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). Despite the differences, men and women business owners can survive without some of the networking contacts though needed to grow a business (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). When advice is needed, women are able to aggressively search for the assistance they need through their networks and are very successful (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000)

Heterogeneous networks are important as they allow a person to retrieve information from a broad array of sources so that the information is unique to them rather than rely on a network that gives the same information repeatedly (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000; Zhao, Ritchie & Echtner, 2011). If an entrepreneur wants to maximize their social network contacts, they should seek multiple domains of social life which provides them with greater access to multiple sources of information for their small business (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). Social capital is a very important and necessary force in the establishment of a small business (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000; Zhao, Ritchie & Echtner, 2011).

## **Relationship Marketing**

Rural retailers in small towns must provide something extra to attract, maintain, and enhance their customer relationships (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000). The services provided can add a uniqueness to the business and aid in fostering lasting relationships with the customers in rural settings (Hurst & Niehm, 2012). Retailers in small rural communities must first know their target market and learn what it takes to understand what the customer is looking for in the business (Hurst & Niehm, 2012).

Relationship marketing strategy is used to attract, maintain, and enhance customer relationships leading to more profitability in the marketplace (Ndubisi, 2007). It is a strategy in which interactions with customers and the relationships that develop are key to the business (Ndubisi, 2007). It is aimed at getting and keeping loyal customers who should be treated as individuals and not just another face in the crowd (Berry & Gresham, 1986).

Attracting new customers is important to every business no matter how long they have been open. Some businesses put a great deal of emphasis on the need to attract new customers, but many organizations today recognize that the profits have more to do with retaining their existing customers (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000). The cost of attracting new customers includes advertising and promotion of products which is not always cost effective, therefore creating good working relationships with repeat customers becomes very important to small businesses (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000).

One basic premise of relationship marketing is maintaining customers throughout their life which will increase the profitability of the business (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000). Loyalty to the customer as well as the business is necessary to start the relationship, and must continue throughout the business relationship with the customer (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000). A loyal

customer can lead to a steady source of revenue for the business and will recommend the services and products to friends and family (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000; Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000).

Enhancing relationships with customers can be achieved by offering the customer something that will increase the value of their visit to your shop such as frequent buyer programs (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000). To retain customers, the service must meet their expectations, merely satisfying the customer is not enough to gain loyalty (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000). They must go above and beyond with service to create the relationships needed to enhance their relationships with the customers (Hurst & Niehm, 2012).

### **Happiness and Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurs tend to be happier than those who work for others. The research into why entrepreneurs are happy is preliminary and there is much to be learned about the reasons entrepreneurs are happier with their career choices than others (Pofeldt, 2014). Pofeldt (2014) found that women entrepreneurs are even happier than their male counterparts. This could be the feeling of control they achieve through their work, family, and leisure time spent away from work. Owning their own business affords them the time to be able to attend family events which makes them happy (Blackwell, 2012). Employment is a large part of human life and plays a role in an individual's satisfaction or happiness in their lives (Binder & Coad, 2012). Entrepreneurs are no different from anyone else when it comes to satisfaction within their own business. The majority of entrepreneurs start new firms hoping for financial gain as well as success with the business (Agrawal, 2014; Blackwell, 2012; Carree & Verheul, 2011). Entrepreneurs start their own businesses to become self-employed and are much more satisfied working for themselves.



Furthermore, happiness can be obtained over time by creating relationships with customers and employees (Agrawal, 2014).

Carree & Verheul (2011) found three important factors that lead to happiness in self-employment: human capital, motivation, and firm performance. Human capital can be defined as the skills acquired from previous jobs, training or life experiences, which will increase the value of the employee in the market place (Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). Entrepreneurs that possess higher levels of human capital have more realistic expectations for their respective business (Carree & Verheul, 2011).

Motivation for entrepreneurs varies based on experiences and expectations. Entrepreneurs can be motivated by internal factors or external factors. These pull and push motivations will be discussed later in the chapter.

Performance is the third factor in entrepreneur satisfaction. Performance could mean the enjoyment entrepreneur experiences with the business itself and also financial satisfaction (Carree & Verheul, 2011). Women seem to have higher job satisfaction than men, and older entrepreneurs have higher satisfaction than younger entrepreneurs (Carree & Verheul, 2011).

While money is important, when the entrepreneur is enjoying the day to day operations of the business, they are less likely to worry about the financial performance of the business (Carree & Verheul, 2011). Entrepreneurs who had previous experience in their current type of business are more likely to be satisfied. A state of happiness is said to help them achieve their overall goal of running a successful business and contributes to an independent lifestyle (Ali, 2014; Binder & Coad, 2012).

### **Pull vs Push Reasons for Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurial motivations have been classified as either pull, which are internally motivated (generally positive, as in motivation for change) or push, which are externally motivated (generally negative, as in, loss of employment) factors (Kirkwood, 2009). Typically, pull factors in order of importance include opportunity, independence, challenge/achievement and money. There is some evidence that entrepreneurs pulled into ventures are more successful because they have greater empowerment in starting and sustaining the endeavor. Push factors generally include demands of having a family and caring for children and job related factors, such as job dissatisfaction, changing world of work, and loss of job. Those pushed into new businesses, may witness greater dissatisfaction because they were thrust into the venture (Amit & Muller, 1995; Hughes, 2003).

**Pull Factors.** Many researchers recognize that seeing or attaining an opportunity to start a business is one of the most important pull factors. Entrepreneurs generally recognize an opportunity and act on it (Carsrud & Brännback, 2010). They are driven by potential success; seeking some form of gain (Carsrud & Brännback, 2010). Opportunity is often recognized when entrepreneurs identify a gap existing in the marketplace, realize this as an opportunity, and together with additional pull or push factors, create their own business (Dawson & Henley, 2012). They are captivated by their new business ideas and start new business activity because they are attracted to the new opportunities that are before them (Amit & Muller, 1995).

Independence is noted as an important pull factor, in that many entrepreneurs cite wishing to run their own businesses, to not have an employer, and to have greater flexibility (Harms et. al., 2014). Entrepreneurs enjoy and gain deep satisfaction from the freedom that small business ownership gives to them (Schjoedt & Shaver, 2007). A major motive for business

ownership is the need to control one's own life and it is suggested that life satisfaction continues on as the owner manages their business (Schjoedt & Shaver, 2007). Independent ownership gives women the freedom to combine their need for independence with management of family circumstances (Dawson & Henley, 2012).

In research conducted by Buttner & Moore (1997) challenge/achievement is noted as a significant pull factor. However, other research, conducted by Kirkwood (2009), challenge is a less important motivation. Entrepreneurs have a need to overcome any disparate challenges and have a strong belief in themselves in order to run their own business (Dalborg & Wincent, 2014). Entrepreneurs are pulled by the challenge/reward of starting their own business and seek the potential monetary rewards that relate to a successful new business (Amit & Muller, 1995).

An additional pull factor noted in the literature would be the desire to earn money through an individual business (Kirkwood, 2009). Some may see money as a necessity such as the primary income for the family, rather than a financial opportunity such as additional income for the family (Dawson & Henley, 2012).

**Push Factors.** Push factors for entrepreneurship include demands of having a family and caring for children and job related factors such as dissatisfaction and unemployment. Women with families often cite the need for flexibility to care for their families as a primary reason for embarking on an entrepreneurial career path (Hodges et al., 2015). However, it is noted, entrepreneurship is exceptionally time consuming and women often indicate that the work continues even at home (Hodges et al., 2015). Women that do decide to start their own business do so with family income generation in mind and try to achieve success for themselves while taking care of the family (Craig, Martin & Horridge, 1997; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007).

In addition to family-related push factors, there seems to be agreement within the literature regarding other push factors such as dissatisfaction with current work situations including eroding working conditions, job stress, job insecurity, and discrimination (Dawson & Henley, 2012; Hughes, 2003). Entrepreneurs often cite lack of opportunity within their previous employment, with little personal autonomy as push factors, as well as boredom in their jobs (Dawson & Henley, 2012). Entrepreneurs can also be pushed out of their current jobs by frustration, an unreasonable boss, unsafe working conditions, and limitations to advancement (Buttner & Moore, 1997).

Specific to older American entrepreneurs, Harms et al. (2014) completed a study on “gray” entrepreneurs. The qualitative study was conducted with semi-structured interviews with 12 older entrepreneurs. The researchers found both push and pull reasons for starting their businesses. Contrary to ageist sentiment, the researchers found that the entrepreneurs were highly ambitious and open to new technologies (Harms et al., 2014).

## CHAPTER 3. METHODS

### Purpose

This study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with quilt shop owners in small rural communities in Iowa. Research was conducted by interviewing the quilt shop owners in their shops to discuss how they started their business, what motivated them, and how they maintain their business in a small rural community in Iowa. The research questions for this study are:

1. How do quilt shop entrepreneurs maintain their businesses in small, rural communities in the state of Iowa?
2. What pull and push factors motivated quilt shop entrepreneurs in these small, rural communities to start and continue their enterprise?
3. What elements of quilt shop ownership provide happiness to the entrepreneurs?

### Participant Selection

A purposive strategy was used in the study for choosing the participants to be interviewed (Esterberg, 2004). Participants were chosen because they were quilt shop owners in rural communities in the state of Iowa. The researcher selected a sample of quilt shop owners based on information from the *All Iowa Quilt Shop Hop* (Carpenter, 2016). A search was done on the US Census Bureau website to attain the population of each city/town listed in the *All Iowa Quilt Shop Hop* periodical. The *All Iowa Shop Hop* is an annual event held June 1 to June 30 (Carpenter, 2016). The state is divided into regions and shoppers are encouraged to visit in regions other than their own. During the month, quilters obtain passports online and present them at each shop that they visit. The passports are stamped, and if at least 5 stamps are on the passport, the quilter can be entered in a drawing to win prizes from shops that participate

(Carpenter, 2016). There were 20 quilt shops located in rural Iowa communities with a population less than 1,500 residents. The owners of the 20 shops were contacted by phone, with 15 able to participate.

Prior to the study, approval for a non-exempt study on human subjects was requested and granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University. Fifteen of the twenty quilt shop owners that were contacted consented to an on-site interview. The questions were emailed to the quilt shop owners to read before the interview. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the quilt shop owner's shops, allowing the owners to feel most comfortable. Each shop owner read and signed a consent form allowing the researcher to interview them and record the spoken word with a digital recorder. Each interview was audio recorded with additional field notes taken by the interviewer to ensure accuracy of the interview transcriptions. The field notes also provided an opportunity for reflection by the author following the interviews when reviewing the transcripts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 2 hours in length, with a mean time of 1 hour and 18 minutes. To ensure validity and authenticity of the transcripts, the quilt shop owners were given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the transcripts. Each quilt shop owner was assigned a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This purposeful, non-probability sample yielded the information necessary for addressing the purposes of this research: considerations of what motivates and sustains a quilt shop entrepreneur in small rural communities in Iowa (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Esterberg, 2004).

### **Instrument**

A semi-structured interview process (Creswell & Creswell, 2013) was used to explore the topic of quilt shop ownership using guided questions, while allowing the owners the freedom to

express themselves in their own words. The interview consisted of a total of 39 questions. The initial questions addressed demographics, background and interests of the quilt shop owner. There were open ended questions (Esterberg, 2004) about their business startup and their work life balance, such as who influenced them in their decisions to open the quilt shop and how do they maintain a work/life balance. The questions about their business strategies included topics such as customers, products they sell, and general business tactics. The last section of questions regarded niche marketing.

The questions were developed using knowledge gained from the business experience and quilting experience of the researcher who has 40 years of quilting experience. The questions were presented to the research committee for review. The committee offered suggestions and changes to the questions. The final questions were checked by the researcher's major professor. The first quilt shop owner was considered the pilot interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to see what adjustments, if any, were needed. There was no need for adjustments in the questions. They flowed well from one question to the next. Because there were no changes to the interview schedule, the pilot interview was included within the data collection and analysis process. Questions are included in Appendix B.

### **Approval and Consent Protocols**

Following Institutional Review Board exemption at Iowa State University (ID #16-098, Appendix A) (Esterberg, 2004), a qualitative study was conducted with a purposefully selected sample of quilt shop owners listed in the *All Iowa Shop Hop* website and periodical.

The fifteen shop owners that agreed to an interview were each presented with a consent form allowing the interview to take place and to be recorded (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). The quilt shop owners were encouraged to read the form which included a description of the study,

risks involved, benefits, participant rights, and an explanation of confidentiality (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) (Appendix C). The interviews were conducted one-on-one with the quilt shop owners and transcribed by a reliable source. The transcriptions were cross-checked against the audio recordings and the field notes taken by the researcher. Pseudonyms were given to participants and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process (Esterberg, 2004).

### **Data Collection Process**

The plan and execution for this study was to follow these steps in collecting the data:

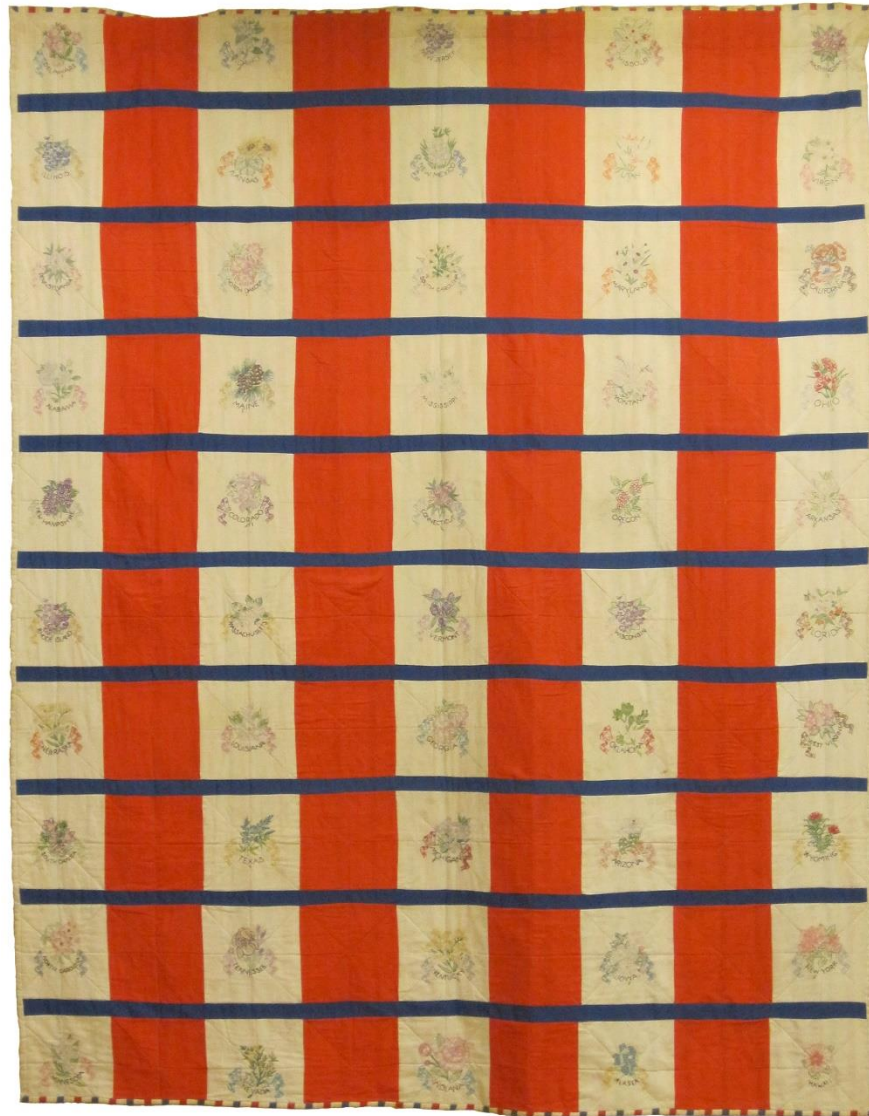
1. Obtain IRB approval.
2. Prepare the questions needed to conduct the study.
3. Review questions with major professor and committee members.
4. Contact participants willing to commit to an interview.
5. Email interview questions to participants.
6. Meet with participants in their quilt shops.
7. Present consent form to participant and have them sign.
8. Conduct and record interview.
9. Transcribe interviews.
10. Email transcript to participant for review and follow-up.

### **Credibility of The Researcher**

I am particularly qualified as the researcher for this study. I have been sewing and quilting since early childhood. I was taught these skills by my mother and grandmother and carried them forward. My mother was a sewer and made clothing for me and for my sisters when we were young. She also made many doll clothes and taught me to sew at a very young age. I enjoyed spending the time with her and also learning a lifelong skill. My grandmother was



always working on a quilt when I would visit her. There was always some new project to be started or finished. My grandmother created a quilt using hand embroidery and quilting in the nations colors of red, white and blue. It was made in commemoration of the bicentennial celebration (Figure 1). She finished the quilt in 1976. Everyone in the family wanted this special quilt and she gifted it to me. The quilt is still in my possession and greatly treasured. The skills learned while spending time with my grandmother and mother were practiced in early education and were very valuable to me.



*Figure 1.* Grandmothers Quilt, Researcher's Collection

I have enjoyed creating quilts from childhood into adulthood. I developed a strong interest in fiber art quilts, which are a unique and a fun way to express artistic talent. Quilting has undergone many changes over the years, from pure utilitarian or functional quilting for use as bed covering, etc. to contemporary quilts, which can be strictly utilitarian or creative expression. Art quilting has emerged in recent years and represents the unlimited creative possibilities of when fabric and artistic talent/vision of the quilter are combined.

As a quilter, I have designed and created traditional quilts, contemporary quilts and art quilts. Traditional quilts that I have created were generally meant for family to be used as bed



*Figure 2. Ren's Bird of Paradise, Researcher's Collection*

coverings. Contemporary quilts that I made were wall hangings that were made with bright and contrasting fabrics. In 2004, I decided I wanted to enter a quilt in a contest with Hoffman International, a fabric company that puts out a specific challenge fabric once a year. The challenge is to use the fabric in any way to accentuate it in a wall hanging. I created a quilt titled *Ren's Bird of Paradise*, (Figure 2) and it was chosen to travel with a trunk show for an entire year. I had four consecutive quilts travel with trunk shows for the Hoffman Challenge. This was the start of art quilting for me, and I began entering different quilting contests. I had four quilts displayed at the American Quilter's Society show in Paducah, KY, which is a popular international show held once a year. I had quilts displayed at the American Quilter's Society show in Des Moines, IA, on two different occasions. My quilt *Reflected Symmetry* (Figure 3) won a second-place ribbon at the Iowa State Fair in 2010.

The skills of quilting and a passion for fibers led me into higher education where I pursued a Bachelor's Degree in Studio Art, a Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, and a PhD in Apparel, Merchandising and Design. The art of quilting became a passion, and visiting quilt shops continued as second nature. Quilt shops tend to receive a higher quality fabric than the big box stores which is reflected in the cost of the yard goods. While visiting the quilt shops I noticed that there never seemed to be a large number of customers in the shop. As a researcher, I began to wonder how the quilt shops could make money or at the very least keep the door open. This observation became the basis for this study. What motivates quilt shop entrepreneurs to start businesses in rural communities in Iowa, what sustains them, and what happiness do they find from their business? It is to be noted that I did not know any of the participants in this study before the interviews.





*Figure 3. Reflected Symmetry, Researcher's Collection*

### **Method of Analysis**

Following interview transcription and review, the researcher and her major professor read each interview transcript individually and used open coding to highlight significant ideas, words, and phrases (Huberman & Miles, 1994). These ideas, words, and phrases, or initial codes, were then grouped into larger ideas or themes. These themes were then compared across the interviews to develop the key concepts (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Following the process of

reading the interviews and open and axial coding, the researcher and her major professor then met and discussed the codes and themes. They negotiated the importance of the findings until they reached 100% agreement (Saldana, 2013). During the initial process, the researcher and her major professor coded independently of frameworks. However, as they finalized the development of themes, the researchers realized the ideas mentioned by the participants were similar to ideas within the entrepreneurship literature regarding pull and push factors. They subsequently re-read and re-analyzed the data with this framework in mind. Another emerging theme was based on the happiness of the quilt shop owners. During the interviews the quilt shop owners used thick, rich descriptions to express their happiness and passion for what they were doing. This assisted the interviewer in achieving external validity for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1984). An existing framework is not available in the literature regarding happiness of quilt shop entrepreneurs. Therefore, the theme of happiness is presented through the three subthemes of customers, relationships, and passion for the quilting business.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the entrepreneurship of quilt shop owners in rural communities in the state of Iowa. In this chapter, data are presented from the interviews with quilt shop owners from 15 rural communities. Of those interviewed, fourteen participants were female and one was a male speaking from his own as well as his recently deceased wife's perspective. See Table 1 for a detailed list of demographic information. Ages of the participants ranged from 40s to 70s with most of the quilt shop owners enjoying a second career. One quilt shop owner was a non-quilter, one was a seamstress, and the remaining thirteen were quilters who practiced the fiber art either beginning in childhood or who started to quilt in adulthood. Seven of the participants owned or co-owned a business before opening their quilt shops.

Table 1  
Demographic Information on Quilt Shop Owners

Name	Age	Yrs. Quilting	Degree/Major	Previous Business
Karen	40s	Adulthood	BA/Accounting	Yes
Christina	40s	Adulthood	HS/N/A	Yes
Amy	50s	Adulthood	AA/Fashion	No
Sam	70s	Non-Quilter	HS/N/A	Yes
Carrie	40s	Childhood	BS/Food Science	No
Jill	50s	Adulthood	N/A/Para Legal	No
Danielle	50s	Adulthood	BA/Accounting	No
Ruth	50s	Adulthood	AA/Rec. Leadership	No
Erin	50s	Adulthood	HS /N/A	Yes
Jessica	50s	Childhood	MA/Education	Yes
Janet	60s	Adulthood	BA/Para Legal	No
Heather	60s	Non-Quilter	HS/N/A	No
Abby	50s	Childhood	BA/Education	Yes
Rhonda	50s	Adulthood	AS/Applied Science	No
Paula	50s	Childhood	HS/N/A	Yes

### **Analysis of The Data**

The participants in the study were interviewed in their respective quilt shops using a semi structured interview format (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The participants were allowed to go off script to discuss the process of starting and maintaining their quilt shops in their own way. The transcriptions were completed by someone other than the researcher, with no names used on the recordings. The typed transcripts were then emailed back to each quilt shop owner for verification or to add any additional thoughts. The transcripts were then analyzed and coded by the researcher and her major professor using open and axial coding. There were three major themes that emerged from the data: pull factors of entrepreneurship, push factors of entrepreneurship, and happiness of quilt shop entrepreneurs. See Table 2 for Emergent Themes.

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Table 2

#### Emergent Themes of Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs

##### Theme I: Strategies for Quilt Shop Owners

- Internet
- Commitment to Community
- Promotions
- Diversity

##### Theme II: Pull Factors of Entrepreneurship

- Opportunity
- Independence
- Challenge/Achievement
- Money

##### Theme III: Push Factors of Entrepreneurship

- Family
- Job Related

##### Theme IV: Happiness of Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs

- Customers
- Relationships
- Passion

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## **Theme I Strategies for Quilt Shop Owners**

Quilt shops represent a niche market. Being located in a small rural community can be very difficult for commerce. Therefore, the quilt shop owners must come up with ways to maintain and grow their business. Strategies that have been successful for shop owners include using the internet for sales, committing to the local community, promotions and diversity.

**Internet.** The popularity of the internet has been very beneficial to a small business. The quilt shop owners were no exception. All the shop owners have a presence on Facebook with a business page that can be used to send out advertising to quilters for a minimal cost. Most of the shop owners had web page presence, and some were selling merchandise from their websites. This is where they claimed to make the bulk of their sales. There were two or three quilt shop owners that started their businesses selling on Etsy, but decided they also wanted to open a brick and mortar store. Paula feels that her Etsy customers are very important to her. Paula says:

I have great customers on Etsy. I love them all and have had a lot of repeat customers. I know some people who think how would you have that because there's a huge amount of variety in Etsy to pick fabric from. For me to have repeat customers is like I must be doing okay I've made them happy.

**Commitment to Community.** The quilt shop owners were involved with their respective communities and wanted to help the communities in which their shops were located. For instance, one quilt owner donated fabric to charitable causes, and another worked with children to create quilts for their church. Jessica is very committed to her community and especially the children. She teaches vacation bible school in the summer months and works with children to teach them about donations. Jessica stated:



I do a kid's camp and I do vacation Bible school. We do a quilt with vacation Bible school so I try to get the children to quilt and when we do that it's always charitable quilting. I never ever teach them to quilt something for themselves always to give to somebody else.

**Promotions.** The quilt shop owners looked to promotions to help drive their business. They would have sales on fabric from time to time to help drive sales and overturn inventory on seasonal items. Some shop owners used sales tools such as punch cards that gave store credit after so much money is spent. Fabric specials were also used such as long yards and fatty fat quarters. Fatty fat quarter is a term used by one quilt shop owner, she made her fat quarters a little larger out of convenience to her customers. Quilters use fat quarters for many quilting projects and Rhonda was no exception. A fat quarter is a piece of fabric that measures 18 x 22 inches. After using fat quarters, Rhonda discovered that a fatty fat quarter worked better for some patterns. Rhonda explains:

You know what a fat quarter is 18 x 22 and a fatty fat quarter is this it's 22 x 22. And it came about because when I would go into a quilt shop, I'd always end up buying two because when I would do something I'd never have enough fabric because they only gave me exactly what you need. We decided to make fatty fat quarters so there 4 inches bigger so when I make a mistake I can redo it and you don't have to buy two of everything.

Quilt shop owners also used bags as a way to attract and retain customers. The customer could buy a bag with the shop name on it for a nominal fee and every time they used the bag, they received a discount. Carrie promoted her red bag club and used her inventory control system to track if they customers were using the bags. Carrie says:

Two ways to become a, become a red bag club member; one you can buy the bag \$10 and you physically get a red bag and then in it are a free pattern. we have sample up by the cash register and then I usually put some other free stuff in there, so the value of what you get for \$10 is there, or if you spend \$50 get the red bag for free and once you're in your in. we never do renewals but then every month I have a red bag club special.

**Diversity in Service Offerings.** Quilt shop owners found diverse ways to make more money for their shops. Shop owners sold products on consignment for crafts people in the town and sold gift items so customers had things to look at other than fabric while visiting the shops. One diverse feature was the offering of long arm quilting to the customers. This was a way for the shop owner to make extra money, but it also was very time consuming for the shop owner. One shop owner had to hire extra help to be able to do her long arm quilting, thereby giving a job to a member of the community. Jill does all of the custom and long arm quilting in her shop because it is her reputation and she doesn't want to take the time to teach her employees to use the machine. The long arm quilt business has been profitable for her in making ends meet in the quilt shop. Jill states:

I'm the only one that does T-shirt quilts. In the custom work, I feel real strongly that that's my reputation. Even though I have excellent staff and it's good you know, they do great samples and things, I long arm those samples. That's my work on the walls so when we go around and show people the designs that are available for long arming that's what's on the walls. That has taken over my life basically at this point because I used to be normal was 10 or 12 quilts waiting. Forty is my new normal.

Quilt shop owners must be strategic in the running of their business to keep it profitable. They must try strategies such as internet presence, commitment to the community, promotions

and diversity in service. Even though the shops are not always profitable, they must use some of these strategies to keep their businesses running.

## **Theme II Pull Factors of Entrepreneurship**

The literature consistently states there are reasons pulling and or pushing individuals into entrepreneurship. This research analyzed the transcribed interviews determining which factors mentioned were pull and which could be classified as push, as described by the entrepreneurs. The uniqueness of this approach is that it analyzes quilt shop entrepreneurs within the lens of pull and push factors, suggesting external/internal factors influence why they chose to go into business for themselves. Although most of the quilt shop owners had multiple reasons for starting their shops when and where they did, there were specific reasons as to why they were pulled or pushed into starting their own business. One caveat to be noted: the lines between pull and push factors are sometimes muddled within the entrepreneurship literature (Dawson & Henley, 2012).

Pull factors discussed in the literature include opportunity, independence and challenges/achievements. In this research, the women saw opportunities to start their businesses as a key factor and independence as a secondary pull factor. Most of the participants saw challenges within their businesses, but were not seeking a challenge/achievement to start a business. In the literature, money could also be classified as a pull factor for many entrepreneurs. However, in this study, the quilt shop owners did not consider the acquisition of money as a primary encouraging or pull factor.

**Opportunity.** Opportunity was mentioned as a business motivation by each of the quilt shop entrepreneurs. However, it was not opportunity specific to quilt shop ownership, but rather to acquire an available, accessible space which was viewed as ideal for their business

development. This is slightly different than the perspective of recognizing a gap in the current marketplace that is common in the entrepreneurship literature. Participant Carrie initially wanted to go into business for herself with a quilting retreat center, but she realized that being in a rural community there were not many buildings available for her to do so. A local quilt shop was closing in a building that had the space for a quilting retreat center, so she was interested in it.

Carrie stated:

I saw a building and knew that I could absolutely turn it into something that would be a creative place and a creative retreat center. Obviously, it had been a quilt shop so it only made sense to keep this part a quilt shop because, of course, when you have retreaters they need to buy supplies. So, to me it became a hand-in-hand opportunity to be able to create the business I wanted to, but on my terms.

Ruth enjoyed antiquing and quilting as hobbies. She started out with a partner, but the partner sold out to her and now she is the sole owner of the business. Ruth stated:

So, my partner and I decided let's do this. We looked at a store in another town on the square where everyone can see you. We could've bought a building there but then she thought there's no one down here. And the guy who owned the building would probably sell it. He's a landlord, so we asked him to see if he'd sell it. He said yeah he'd sell it. We thought what a perfect spot because it's in between both our houses. It's sitting at the intersection of two highways and highly visible. Everyone can see you so we decided to open this one.

Jill saw an opportunity when her husband decided to semi-retire. He had a very prosperous law practice but had wanted to scale back, so he reduced his business to almost half,

leaving a large space in the building that he owned. Jill was retiring from her first career and saw an excellent opportunity to open a quilt shop in the empty half of his building. Jill said:

It was kind of a joke.... we had both these buildings full of paralegals and himself and I was a paralegal for him at one point. Anyway, somebody jokingly said “What are you going to do?” That building you know that half of the building sitting empty and he left to go fishing had made some snide comment how I would put a quilt shop and then he left for two weeks to go fishing and the wheels started turning.

Abby was a stay at home mom who lived on the family farm with a craft cottage on the property. She wanted to expand to a quilt shop because quilting had become her favorite hobby over the years of raising her children. She was thinking of a building on the community square when her daughter approached her about the possibility of combining a quilt shop with a bakery. Her husband found the perfect location and put a bid on the building. Abby stated:

So, then my daughter graduated from Iowa with a degree in arts, metals focused and she turned to me and said well what I really would like would be a bakery. I’m like okay, my mother-in-law was an excellent baker and cook and my daughter spent a lot of time with her on the farm in the kitchen. So, I open my big mouth and said you know what would be really great, we could have a tea room, bakery combined with quilt shop and my husband said well we need to look at this building.

Rhonda decided to add on to her home to create a space for her workshop for her crafting. She had given up part of her home to care for her ailing parents and needed her own space. While creating the new room, her husband and daughter questioned whether it should be turned into a quilt shop instead. Rhonda stated:

I was going to make this into a studio, which is I paint, I sew, I build everything so I was just going to make it into a studio. And when I got going on it because there's a sink in the corner to rinse out my paints and bathroom so I didn't have to run back in the house and everything else. They all looked at me and said, "are you sure you don't want a quilt shop?" and I was kind of like, "I don't know." You know I was going to finish it but I don't know what I was going to do with it besides just spread out all my sewing stuff you know. Make it probably a real big studio and my husband goes well you know I've been in business for 25 years, you can go into business if you want to and I said "you sure"? So, one thing led to the other and pretty soon I was getting stuff to put into a quilt shop and one thing leads to another and here I am.

Christina was a successful restaurant entrepreneur for many years in her rural community. When the local quilt shop in the community was closing, she decided to buy out their merchandise sensing an opportunity on the horizon. Christina said:

There was a quilt shop in town that they were retiring and frankly was going under. I decided at that time my restaurant was going extremely well so I purchased their inventory and was going to start a quilt shop, through that and build on that. And then during that time, the town hired a police man and he started tag teaming with the county sheriff's department and they started pulling people over just for dumb stuff frankly, and I went from a booming restaurant business to nothing in 3 months. I held through for the restaurant a year and half later and I had to close because I had no customers. I then started converting the building from restaurant to quilt shop and moved the quilt shop to this location and changed the name and that's where I'm at with that right now.

Amy an entrepreneur left her high stress job with the intent of operating an online quilt shop until an opportunity became open in a small, rural community. Amy thoughts were:

And I thought, “Do I really want to do this?” I thought maybe now is the time to think about doing the online quilt shop. So, I started thinking about that kind. I knew I was to be not working as of September and I mentioned it to a friend and he said why don’t you look at this building? The owner wanted to retire and I thought it’s a lot of space. He said it will be perfect for you so I had mentioned it to somebody and they told me what price the [company who wanted to buy it] had told her and I thought that that was way out of my league. Too much so I just started thinking about just doing the online and he asked me couple months later. He said did you contact the owner and I said I can’t afford what she wants. No, she doesn’t want that, well she didn’t want to sell the building to this company so anyway it was significantly less, well within my budget and I thought why not and I said worst-case scenario I have fabric to last a lifetime and have a big sewing space.

Sam was a quilt shop owner speaking on behalf of his recently deceased wife. She had been a long arm quilter for many years and had decided she wanted to expand. There were no buildings available in the community that they lived in so they decided to enclose the porch on their home and open a quilt shop there. Sam stated:

I think she had practiced enough on the long arm she could do that we had this enclosed (the porch) totally done in 2004 but then pretty much then she wanted some fabric to bring customers into and figured that bring quilts into be quilted.

Danielle wanted to start her own business after her children were in school full time. She wanted to find something close in so that the girls could walk to the business after school each

day. The community had very few building spaces available, but she rented a small space on the town's main street. She was very happy for the space and location, but in the future, would probably move to a larger space as the business grows. Danielle said:

I live here in town. Now my warehouse is four blocks away and it's all here. My girls are still in school; they are 10 and 13. I want to be in town you know six years from now maybe that's something we can think about again. But I don't want, I want to be here if they have to, they can walk to the store from school. After school, they can come down it's a walkable distance, they can come down to the store so that's you know, I need a big space in town and there's just nothing.

Jessica had been a quilt shop owner in a rural community near her hometown and wanted to open a retreat center. She found a site that had a historic barn close to the community and thought that would be the perfect place for her retreat center. After obtaining the property, the barn was deemed uninhabitable. The house on the property was quite functional and was turned into a retreat center. At this point, she decided to move her quilt shop to the house so she did not have to travel between the shop and the retreat center. Jessica stated:

Okay you're sitting right here on a US Highway. We are situated in a house along the highway. We're a mile and a half south of town. The house is a quilt retreat and then the shop is an add-on. Hasn't always been here. 10 years ago, when I opened my shop, I opened it in a historic building downtown and continued to have it there until I acquired this house. And then I moved it over here with every intent of, we had a gorgeous 1898 historic barn and it was on the highway. It was on the national historic record of historic barns. I wanted to say that would be the quilt retreat but it was too far gone, couldn't get it saved so instead we deconstructed it and that's what's on the walls here is my barn. The



roof of the barn is on her ceiling so complete with gunshot wounds in the roof. So, it just kind of it means something to me that I still have the barn here.

Janet worked for two different firms in the Des Moines, IA, area before becoming a realtor. She wanted to quilt and had a long arm quilting machine but not a good space to use it. She was trying to sell a building for a client when she realized that it would be a perfect space for her to set up her long arm quilt machine and start incorporating fabric into it and making it a full quilt shop. Janet stated:

I had my real estate license I tried to sell this building for the owner as her realtor and so you know I had been in it, I knew the ups and downs. Back when I had first started getting involved in quilting you know one of the things that I love to do was go to other quilt shops.

Heather took over a well-established business in her rural community. The previous owner wanted to retire and thought Heather would be an excellent person to buy her out, although the location of the business had to change. The previous owner helped Heather find the right building on the square and Heather moved her inventory to the new location where she has been located for many years. Heather said:

The lady that I worked for who owned the fabric shop before decided that she didn't want to continue doing that and she convinced me that I could run it. It was not this location so I was buying this building and moving the inventory from the former business to here. Well, the former owner put a bid on it because she thought it would be more conducive to me on the square. And I was tagging along to work for her and then she just kind of turned the tables and it's like oh dear she convinced me that I could do it I guess.

Paula who had entrepreneurship experience with her husband who owned a scrap metal business before his death wanted to open an Etsy shop and sell fabric. Her husband died suddenly and she was left with a scrap metal business and building on the edge of town she did not know what she wanted to do with. Her son was available to help liquidate her husband's business, and she decided to open a brick and mortar quilt shop in part of the building. Paula stated:

I started it before I started this, I mean I had an Etsy shop before my husband died that I already bought some bolts and started a little bit of like selling online and I'm glad I did it that way because as you said the technical thing, technology thing it's kind of helped me.

Opportunity is one of the most recognized pull factors for starting a new business as recognized in the literature. Entrepreneurs see a gap in the marketplace and start their business accordingly. However, in this study, while the quilt shop owners recognized the need or the desire for their quilt shop, the more pressing pull factor was that opportunity often presented itself in the location of a suitable building. These buildings were located in the town's square, alongside a highway, or even in their own homes. Many of the entrepreneurs also discussed other individuals as crucial to identifying the buildings and encouraging them to realize their business aspirations. Once they found their respective locations, and with some encouragement from friends and family, the entrepreneurs moved forward with their businesses.

**Independence.** The desire for independence often pulls entrepreneurs into business ownership. There were six women in this study who decidedly wanted to run their shop their own way and did not want to work for someone else. Karen, one of the younger entrepreneurs, had small children and wanted to be able to be there for them as well as running her shop on her

terms. She saw opportunity and independence with being able to open her own shop. Karen stated:

That's just it, it was timing and opportunity. I knew I was going to do something when my youngest went into kindergarten. I knew I wanted my own business but I did not want to work for anybody else. I was still long arm quilting at the time, but I was also the shop quilter for another shop here in Iowa and she decided she wanted to retire the same year my child was going to kindergarten. We worked out a system and I started mentoring with her probably a year and a half or so before my shop opened. I would go to markets with her and sell for her so it just came about.

Erin who obtained her shop as a turn-key business is very independent and enjoys running the shop her way. Erin said:

Oh, my gosh, the freedom to get to do what I love. You know I mean how many people really can do that anymore? Not a lot. I mean I walk around here with my slippers on. I'm known as the quilt shop lady who wears slippers because it's like you're welcome in my house.

Christina who had many different careers when she was younger, decided that she did not want to work for anyone else and continue her journey as an entrepreneur. When she saw her restaurant failing, she decided to continue owning a business, but this time, a quilt shop.

Christina stated:

I wanted to continue to do my own business verses going back to work for a company or a huge corporation. I just hate the fact that you're a number to somebody and you're having to go by what they want you to do and not what you want to do. I've done that, I did that my whole life so far and yes, I'm only 48 I don't like it. I'm very independent

and I just enjoy working on my own schedule and helping people and being a part of everybody else helping.

Danielle had previous work experience as an accountant. She also had retail experience. When her children were young, she enjoyed being a stay at home mom. Once the children were in school, she wanted to go back to work. She wanted to be available for her children should the need arise and did not want to have a strict work schedule. She decided at that time that she wanted to open her own business and become a quilt shop entrepreneur. She talked about the decision once her children turned ages 8 and 11, she stated:

So, it was time for me to go back to work and I decided I didn't want to go work for someone, I wanted to try and start my own business. And this actually gives me more freedom. Something happens, my kid's sick, I close the store and I go home to them. You know, I mean I have more control. I don't have to worry about telling someone I'm sorry I have to take this time off. You know granted it's a business and I can't just close willy-nilly whenever I want to but I do have more control on my time.

Ruth was unemployed for three years and decided it was time to do something new with her time. She and a friend had spent a great deal of time visiting antique and quilt shops throughout the state. They talked about what they would or wouldn't do in their own business. Ruth decided that the quilt shop would be more attuned to her interests and she did not want to work for an employer. Ruth said:

Because I quit my job like three years before, and I had time. My friend and I worked together and talked about wanting to start an antique store and go around and buy all these antiques. So, I decided, why not do a fabric store?

Jessica who retired from her first career decided she wanted to open her own quilt shop so that she would have more flexibility to be with her family. She stated:

First priority grandchildren, vacation, our friends, church and second priority is here so my husband and I both are overachievers and workaholics.

Independence is an important factor for many of the quilt shop entrepreneurs. According to Schjoedt & Shaver (2007) entrepreneurs gain satisfaction from the freedom that ownership gives them. This is very true for the quilt shop entrepreneurs in this study. They all had a need to control their lives while still being able to earn a living and work at what they love. The personal reasons the entrepreneurs in this study stated for wanting to be independent ranged from freedom to run their business their own way to being flexible so that they can take care of their families without any oversight from an employer.

**Challenge/Achievement.** Challenge/achievement is also a pull factor for some entrepreneurs, in this study, the quilt shop owners talked about having many challenges to overcome in the process of opening their respective businesses. In the case of Carrie, who was trying to find the perfect location to open her shop including a retreat center, it became a challenge and source of achievement for her to get the location, create the retreat center, and open the quilt shop. Carrie stated:

I can do this; I could do this. I could have a retreat center because I held a couple of retreats at a hotel for another retreat center and I get the whole quilt shop business. I understand the long arm business; I mean having all of those things together so in the back of my mind I'm thinking how could I do this?

Another quilt shop owner saw a challenge/achievement to open a quilt shop after her husband passed away. Paula and her husband had been small business entrepreneurs most of

their lives. When he died suddenly, she decided that she would challenge herself to create a new business for herself as a “grief project.” With the help of her children, she opened her quilt shop on the land that she and her husband owned. The location was convenient for her, but as time passed, she realized that she needed a more central location. Paula said:

Yes, my husband died and this was my grief project so that I would have something to focus on that was very positive. So, that’s why so as for who influenced the decision that was just why that was, why I decided to do it so in its own way this is been a place to save me. When my husband was here and I did spend a lot of time doing stuff. When he was here, but I also didn’t have to make my own living or all of it. Now I’m responsible for trying to make you know income a lot more than I ever was because he was very good at what he did. I was the backup crew you know; I did all the paperwork and detail work. He’s the guy that pulled off all the deals. I’ve tried to copy him now in a lot of ways, how did he go about it because I hated cold calls and things like that. Now I make cold calls, it’s like what’s the worst that’s going to happen? They’re going to say no, yeah or next person.

According to Amit & Muller (1995) entrepreneurs are pulled by the challenge and achievement of starting their own business. They need to overcome the many challenges associated with opening their business such as in the case of Paula with the loss of her spouse or Carrie in overcoming personal doubt.

**Money.** Fairlie & Robb (2009) noted that women often enter entrepreneurship as a secondary income for the family. Of the quilt shop owners interviewed, 13 of the 15 were married to spouses who worked, giving the shop owners the opportunity to open their shops without needing to be the primary income earner. The quilt shop owners interviewed discussed

money as important, but also highlighted other reasons for entering and remaining in the business.

Carrie talked about money as not being the only sign of success for her quilt shop. She knew she was not going to get rich but still enjoyed the business. Carrie stated:

True success will be when I take a paycheck home, I mean at some point, because then I'll know that I have all the pieces going in the right direction, I have successes every day, sometimes it's a customer success, sometimes it's a quilt success, sometimes it's a marketing success, but it's all those financial pieces it's still a business. At some point, I've got to be able to make money at it and so the day that I not only pay the bills but also pay myself will I think really show that I will have made it where I want it to be the whole picture.

Ruth who has been in business since 2002 has yet to draw a paycheck from her quilt shop because she continuously puts the money back into the shop by purchasing fabric and making renovations. Ruth said:

I'm not gonna buy my vacation home on it. The shops all self-sufficient. Two years ago, I added a kitchen, moved my bathroom here and that's paid off. The other room we added in five or six years ago so I mean it's grown and it still paying for itself. I haven't put any money into making it bigger and like a say I get some trips out of it too. It pays for my vacations when I go on them.

Jessica, another quilt shop owner with a retreat center looks at the money issue very realistically. She has a spouse that is very supportive, and knows that she will not become wealthy from what she perceives as her passion. Jessica stated:

There's no one that goes into it to make a buck, they're going into it because they love quilting and that's different than a lot of businesses you know. It's wonderful to be paid for your passion and so like our staff I mean they work here because they get a 30% discount on fabric and so you know heck if your hobbies paid for so yeah and I don't know a single quilt shop owner, I don't know a single one that doesn't go into it for their passion. So, it's really that's why markets fun because everybody's in it because it's what they love to do not because they thought oh I'm going to make a killing on this.

Janet is in total agreement with the other quilt shop owners, you will not become wealthy with your shop unless you give it time. Janet stated:

It's you know, it's been good for a lot of reasons money isn't one of them so if you are, you know if somebody is money driven if you have to make X amount of dollars to you know support your family be ready for some lean times I think eventually you can get there but I think it just takes time, it takes time to build relationships, it takes time to build you know customer base, it takes time to learn what sells and what doesn't sell and you're not always going to be right.

Money was important to each of the entrepreneurs, however, they viewed the lifestyle aspect of their business as more important. The satisfaction of owning the quilt shop enabled them to continue the business. Money did not seem to be a driver, because perhaps it was not necessary for their continued success. Discussion about money during the interviews was brief, but most did not have to depend on the shop for profits, they just needed enough to keep the shops open.



### **Theme III Push Factors of Entrepreneurship**

Push factors that were described in the literature included children, family, and job related factors such as job dissatisfaction and the changing world of work. Within the literature, family means the flexibility to take care of small children or elderly parents (Hodges et al., 2015). Within these interviews, four of the fifteen of the participants indicated they desired the opportunity for flexibility to be with family whether it be children, grandchildren, spouses or parents. Another four viewed families as a push factor in that they encouraged them to start their own business. Within this research, family often encouraged to the point of pushing nascent entrepreneurs into business ownership.

**Family.** Heather values the time she gets to be with her family while working in her shop. She has sisters that work with her, and she enjoys her mother coming into the shop and spending time with them. Heather stated:

I would say that the most important thing that I've got out of the last 25 years was our mother would come in and spend time in here. She would rip out seams for us. She would piece quilts, she would tie quilts and any time our family, brothers and sisters would come back to visit, this was the meeting place and that is the most important thing that I think I've received out of this. A chance to spend more time with everyone.

Karen finds great enjoyment from being able to share her business with her family. Her quilt shop is on the family property so the kids are always close by and able to work with her in the shop after school and on weekends. Karen stated:

The biggest enjoyment is I get to do this with my family. My kids are involved. It's really a family business so I think that that's probably the most enjoyment.

Carrie changed careers so that she could be close to her children and be there if they needed her for anything. She chose her current location based on where the children attend school so they could come to the shop after school and be with her until it was time to go home. The quilt shop provides her with the flexibility to be there for the children always. Carrie stated:

I want to be a mother; I want to be able to have the kids here in our town. This elementary school is six blocks away and so they can walk here and the high school is five blocks. Once they get into high school it'll be right here. There have been so many times already in the five years that we've been open that I'm so thankful that I have a kitchen here because the kids had football practice and the boys come on the bus and there's enough time in between that I feed them supper before they have to go to practice. That kind of thing that's what I wanted to see happen I wanted the flexibility if a child was sick, I could get to them and they can be with me and not feel like you know like I wasn't available for them.

Abby who opened her shop with help from her daughter enjoys the flexibility provided by being her own boss. She was able to have her children and grandchildren in the shop with her. Her children enjoy the space because they are crafty as well as their mother and enjoy spending time with the family. Abby said:

I have a great quilting space and even with three daughters and two of them live nearby and they're all interested in fabrics and crafts and so you know that's support. Well my daughter is here and that helps you know. It's like as you saw just you know back and forth and my other daughter, she before she had her two-year-old she would come in and help out as needed and when she could. And you know my husband actually making the fabric shelving and things and they've just all been right there along the way.

Erin was a previous business owner from a large city who had relocated to a rural area in Iowa. She did not know what she would do with her time. At that time, a local entrepreneur was selling her quilt shop because she wanted to retire. Erin's husband was insistent that she look at the shop and make a bid. Erin stated:

It was my husband, yeah I was the one going I owned a business once before been there done that. This time of my life I don't want to do that anymore and he was the one that said, no we gotta do this it's a little Goldmine. You know because you like to talk you like that customer service and you know he was the one that in fact I told the previous owner three times nope, I'm good and he's the one that kept bringing it back around going, we got to do this so it was him.

Jill wanted to open a quilt shop in a vacant building owned by her husband, but she had another idea in mind as well. She was still working full time when the opportunity arose to start her business so she needed someone to run the quilt shop for her. She had a daughter that had a disability and wanted to get her out of the house and back into society. She talked with her daughter about running the quilt shop for her for a year until she retired. This idea worked well for the family, and now Jill is running the business full time and her daughter has moved onto other things. Jill stated:

So, and I also had a daughter who was in a severe car accident when she was a child and had some lingering brain injury. She was becoming reclusive and I saw this happening. There's no way to have a conversation with her through the back door to do this to get her to realize she needed to get out of the house because the boys are in school than she could not just sit there not talking to people all day long and that's what she wanted to do. So, I thought well you know if I did a quilt shop, I don't want to work 70 hours a week.

She will be a full-time employee and I will work to relieve her, you know basically give her the business after a while and so this worked.

Rhonda started her quilt shop with the encouragement of her husband and daughter. She originally designed her space for a studio and her husband thought it would make a wonderful quilt shop. She was not sure that was what she wanted to do, but with some encouragement from her family, she decided it would be a good project for her to undertake. Rhonda stated that it was her husband that pushed her into opening the shop. Rhonda stated:

Probably my husband because he said, well actually my daughter and my husband. My daughter said I'll do whatever I can to help you because she just like that and I think she knew that I wanted something to think about, I wanted something to do. I didn't have anything besides grass to mow and stuff to work on outside you know like somebody has to repair this or that you know and so I had nothing really to think about. So, they decided they wanted me to have something to think about that they thought I'd enjoy.

Paula lost her husband when she was in her 50s and did not know what to do with her life at that point. She and her husband shared a business that she no longer wanted to pursue. With the assistance of two of her children, she remodeled part of the building and opened her quilt shop. Paula stated:

I have 3 children, 2 of them live close enough for me to see them a lot so and actually the youngest one is who built this. He and I still had an employee then for our company. They built this and finished it all and then all of them have helped no, I shouldn't say all of them, the two boys, the two boys are who have helped like you know do computer work, build all the shelving, haul all this fabric around. You know a lot of work that I

didn't have to hire somebody to come help me do. Yeah because if I had to hire somebody to do everything I wouldn't have; I just wouldn't have done it.

In line with the literature, entrepreneurs are pushed into business by the flexibility of being able to spend time with their families. The quilt shop entrepreneurs, however, are split on how the family dynamic influenced or pushed them into starting their business. There were eight entrepreneurs that reported family reasons for starting their own business. Of those eight, four of the participants said that they liked being able to be there for their children, grandchildren, and parents. Four of the eight stating family reasons for opening their own shop felt as though their spouses pushed them into opening their business for their own personal reasons.

**Job Related.** Job related issues are a strong push for some entrepreneurs looking to open their own business. Just as the literature discussed, entrepreneurs could be unsatisfied with their previous employment and pushed into starting their own business. They could be unhappy with their entire job situation and want to do something about it. The same is true for some of the quilt shop entrepreneurs interviewed. Four quilt shop owners talked about reasons why they were not happy with their former careers.

Janet lost the career she enjoyed due to a layoff and tried different things to fill her time because she was too young to retire. She started quilting with a friend and decided that she would like to go into business for herself. She became a long arm quilter first and then opened her quilt shop. Janet stated:

Well, I got laid off from my downtown job at the law firm and I did you know I was 58 and I was like oh cripes I'm too, it's too early to retire, don't have the money to retire you know so I got a job. I did get another job with a local bank. I mean I was further away again and I could only it was half the salary I had been making so then I went and got my

real estate license and came back you know down here and worked for a real estate company and that just, I just didn't like it.

Amy saw a big change in the world of work after 9/11 in this country and wanted to make a change in her life. While she was still working for the airline, she was starting an online quilt shop. Once she could leave the airline completely, she was able to open her brick and mortar store while keeping her online store. Amy stated:

I before I moved here I used to work for a major airline and after 9/11 I decided I wanted to make a change. I wanted to get out of the airline industry and they were offering, they were going through major cutbacks. We were heading into bankruptcy and it was a good time to make change and I tried very hard to get furloughed. And they wouldn't let me go. The first time it came up I thought I was going to do an online quilt shop.

Carrie had worked professionally most of her career and for a time enjoyed it very much, but as soon as she had children, the 70-mile commute to and from work became a burden for her. She took a job that required travel occasionally which worked out better for her family but it still had some struggles associated with it. She was at a trade show setting up and realized some of her equipment had been stolen and she had to improvise. During the process, she was injured and at that time she decided that she wanted to open her own retreat and quilt shop and be home with her children and enjoy what she was doing. Recounting the injury and her thought process, Carrie stated:

I swear I had broken my shin and I drove home with a big bruise on my leg. This is not what I wanted to do. This is not what I was meant to do, to load up trucks and drive them to Ohio and back.

Jill enjoyed a career as an elected official in her rural community, but did not want to make it a lifelong career. She told her friends and family that she would do it for no more than 14 years. When her term was up, she decided that she wanted to go into business herself and not to have to deal with politicians any more. Jill stated:

I was a county official, an elected county official for 14 years and when I ran I told people I was only intending on staying in office that long. When that time drew near for me to have to run for election again a lot of people came to me and said no, no you can't and I said no you know my word is important to me and I said I wouldn't stay. I didn't believe in lifelong positions for these people so anyway I was 54 years old when I left.

The literature states that there are many job-related issues that can push an entrepreneur into starting their own business. The quilt shop owners that were interviewed were no different. They had reasons such as not wanting to work for corporate America again, layoffs, dissatisfaction with positions, and wanting to work for themselves.

#### **Theme IV Happiness of Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs**

The quilt shop owners in the study each greatly emphasized the fact that they were happy with their current business. Within these discussions the three subthemes related to happiness that emerged from the interviews were: customers, relationships, and passion stemming from their quilt shop business.

**Customer.** Quilt shops are a niche store and their customers are willing to drive to their locations. The quilt shop owners interviewed all felt very strong connections to their customers, they wanted them in their shops and wanted them to be happy while visiting the shop. They felt that to run their shops successfully, they must have good relationships with their customers. The

owners stated that they work very hard to accomplish that goal. The quilt shop owners had similar responses about their happiness and the happiness of their customers.

Karen sees a great personal benefit in the moods of her customers when they come into her shop. The happy customers lead her to feel more upbeat about her shop which helps her to enjoy the customer visits even more. Karen stated:

Benefits and an enjoyment would definitely be having people come in and shop and look for material. 99% of the people that are going to walk through that door are going to be so happy to come in I mean they are just ecstatic. They see new things at each store they see a pattern that 'oh that's really cute I want to do that' or just get ideas and that is so rewarding for someone for when they come in. And it's not like when you are working at a convenience store and you have some grumpy person come in then they are really mad I mean it's just so different an environment it's really beneficial and makes you feel great.

Christine also benefits from the happy demeanor of the customers. In her earlier career, she worked for convenience stores and corporations that did not treat their employees well. She enjoys her quilt shop ownership even more after having worked many jobs where she dealt with unpleasant customers. Christine stated:

Quilt shop ownership, I can tell you that owning a quilt shop is very rewarding because in this business and in several I'm sure same businesses owners that the people come in are happy. I mean they are so happy I mean you don't have a hardly ever that somebody comes in and grumble sounds they are happy because we're in their fun time they love seeing all the fabrics they love seeing displays they love everything about it and that is just so rewarding just to have that come through you know it's just fun it's great.



Quilting to Amy is an enjoyable pastime and that is why she opened her own quilt shop. She enjoys the customer service and the ability to interact with her customers while they make their purchases. Amy stated:

It's not a whim it's something you enjoy doing and it's not just the quilting, it's the customer service and the people interaction is what I enjoy. I enjoy seeing what other people are doing and that's why I like Pinterest. You really see what other people are doing whether it's yesterday's antique quilt or somebody's quilt today. It's the customer interaction, it's you know every time you make a sale it's like you've done something right. You know I finished a quilt we got a top done got an idea to do something it, it's probably the biggest is working with customers and helping them achieve something they enjoy doing.

Carrie got very emotional when talking about her customers. She had met some very amazing people while owning her quilt shop. She feels that her life is greatly enriched by the customers she serves. They would come into the shop and she and her staff not only helped them with their creative projects, but learned from them at the same time which she states is very rewarding. Carrie stated:

And you know I have to say that I get emotional about things like this, my customers enrich my life it is amazing, amazing the people who come in and are creative and the people who we can help be creative. But sometimes the reason why they're making quilts is wonderful but I feel very, very lucky day in and day out that my job is to help somebody else be happy.

The business of owning a quilt shop can be very rewarding. The shop is a niche shop that customers want to visit. It is not like an appointment that must be kept. Carrie also wants her customers to feel welcome and be happy when they enter her shop. Carrie said:

People when they walk through the door they're happy. They're not coming here because it's a funeral parlor, funeral home where they're trying to bury somebody, a doctor's office where they are sick and find out what's wrong with them. It's they're coming in here because they're happy and because they're making something that's making them happy and our job is to make them happier.

Paula wants her customers to feel at home in her shop, but also wants to give them some freedom in choosing the right fabrics for their quilting projects. She does however, encourage the customer to try new things. Paula stated:

My goal is to encourage everybody with whatever way they want to go about it, and there's no right or wrong to this type of activity and I know in some places that does happen to them. Yeah so now I just want them to be happy when they come here and find something they like and if I can help them do whatever it is they're doing I will.

Customers are a very important part of any business, but to be able to say that your customers are always happy is a real bonus to your business. The quilt shop owners that were interviewed all regarded their customers as the most important part of their day. They went out of their way to provide the services that the customers requested and did so while providing them with the best customer service possible.

**Relationships.** The quilt shop owners interviewed except for two were all quilters starting their hobby somewhere between childhood and adulthood. It has been noted in the literature that quilters want to have connections and relationships with other quilters (Burt &

Atkinson, 2011) and the quilt shop is an excellent place to start this process. By quilting themselves, many quilt shop owners used their shops to build on their own skills, and teach these skills to their customers. Having knowledge of the hobby helped enable the shop owners to create lasting relationships with the customers that entered their stores. As has been stated, it is much more expensive to find new customers than it is to retain the regular customers (Berry & Gresham, 1986). Seemingly intuitively, many of the quilt shop owners went out of their way to provide the best customer service possible to their regular customers.

While Karen talked about ways to find new customers, she also discussed how her regular customers provided her with the most joy. Karen stated:

My big thing for getting customers to come back is what they get when they come. I mean we have regular customers that come back all the time and that includes customers that travel through here that we may only see every few months but they come back because of the enjoyment they have when they are here and that's really what it comes down to, the way that they are treated because you know quilting is such a social thing that that's just the key. So as long as I have fresh inventory and they are treated well when they are here and they are inspired and they have a good time when they are here I think that is the staple to get them to come back and it seems to be working. To get them in the door to get them here I'm still just I don't know yet you know I'm still working on it, trying to keep getting the word out and so forth I don't know.

The aspect of quilt shop ownership Carrie most enjoys is her customers. She feels the excitement and laughter of her customers makes her job fun and she loves to see the people come into her shop for quilt supplies as well as her retreat center upstairs. When her customers are having fun, she feels very successful. Carrie stated:

The people, absolutely the people. Seeing what it is they are doing to be creative. Love that, love the excitement, and love laughter. There's nothing better than having a group of people upstairs and hearing them laugh and knowing that they're having a good time. So, for me that is a success.

Jill wants her staff and herself to be on first name basis with her customers. She goes as far as to try and remember what they are currently working on as well as past projects. This makes the customers feel welcome in her quilt shop and encourages them to return. Jill said:

You know their name, call them by name get to know these people, because they love it when they walk in and you remember them. Now they want you to remember the last project they were working on and what fabric they bought, you know at least acknowledge that they are here. They complain a lot when [other shops] don't and [that] other shops don't often answer your question.

Ruth feels as though she has become one with her quilt shop. She has made many personal relationships with her customers and it shows when they enter her quilt shop on a regular basis. She has formed so many creative relationships that sometimes she feels it is more beneficial to her than the customers. Ruth stated:

I think it's kind of become me or I've become it. I've met so many people and made a lot of great friends from doing this that I'd never met otherwise. They're anywhere from Indianola, Centerville, Melrose, local gals, one from Pleasant Hill. We always get together twice a year and go do retreats and if I hadn't had this I wouldn't have known all these people. We have just become really close friends.

Ruth goes on to talk about how she goes out of her way to form relationships with her customers. When hosting classes, she goes out of her way to make sure the group is comfortable, encouraging pot lucks. She stated:

Yes, but then they come in and get their supplies and definitely benefits me to and we always have potluck when we do classes. I started out fixing meals for and charging five dollars for it but they would just rather bring their own food. Then they can brag on whatever they made. They could say this is wonderful what is your recipe? Ladies like to cook, when they take it somewhere for potluck we like to bring something. We told them if you don't have time don't worry, there's enough food for everybody and if there is not enough food we can run down and buy pizza for everybody. Sometimes we end up with all desserts, we better have a main meal. I'll go get pizza.

Erin's customers look for validation by bringing in their finished quilts to show whoever is in the quilt shop at that given time. Quilters love to show off their work to other quilters, and unless they enter contests, the quilt shop is the best venue for such presentations. Quilt shop owners enjoy the relationship with the customer when they bring back their final project. Erin stated:

I'll see one customer 3 or 4 times a week you know which is fine. And they all bring their stuff in and you know they like to show it off because they might not show their quilts in a quilt show ever so they like to have that good strokes now and then.

Abby enjoys the relationship of spending time with likeminded quilters. Quilters thrive on interactions with other quilters and get new ideas from each other. She also realizes that every quilter is an individual and likes different things. This adds to the relationships that are formed. Abby stated:

Well seeing, getting new ideas you know. The interaction with you know the other quilters, people who love the same thing I do... But they bring their personalities and their projects what they love into quilting. So, it's not just me and you know me thinking that well I like this so everybody that walks through the door should like this.

Rhonda loves the relationship that she has with fellow quilters. There is a sense of comradery amongst quilters that other groups don't always understand. She has had interactions with quilt groups in her area and the people of the area watch out for one another and miss someone if they are not at meetings. These relationships are very important to Rhonda. She stated:

Wonderful loving people, when I didn't show up at the guild meeting for a couple months they were calling me and asking me was I okay? I take that to mean they like me over you know just I'm a quilt shop owner that they buy stuff from. They actually consider me friends. When I show up at the guild meeting, they always seem to ask how I'm doing, what's up and do you have this in, do you have that.

Ruth feels that every customer is important. She is not concerned with who you are or where you have come from. She wants to form relationships with all her customers that walk through the door. She also believes in customer relationships as very important. She has regular customers that are on fixed income that want to sew, so she allows them to pay at the end of the month for their yard goods. Ruth stated:

I don't care what you look like coming in dressed like a million bucks or you can be dressed like you just climbed out of the ditch. Doesn't make any difference to me what matters is your money is green! There's some really different ones out there, you wonder how they stay in business if that's how they treat their customers. I let people charge.

What other shops do you go to that lets you take fabric home and not pay for it today? I don't think I've seen any of those. I have one lady probably in her 70s and I know she is on a fixed income; she doesn't have much but she just loves to sew. She's sews every day, makes her happy she'll come in and look over all my clearance fabric and asks can I pay next month? I say, 'That's fine, I don't care.'

Relationships with the customers that frequent the quilt shops was stated as extremely important to the quilt shop owners. The quilt shops are all located in small towns throughout the state and their customers come from many miles away to visit the shops making their relationships even more important. The owners talked about offering special opportunities for their customers such as punch cards, percentage discounts on fabrics, classes, etc., but seemingly the most important aspect the small quilt shop owner can offer their customers is good relationships. The shop owners all discussed going out of their way to establish good relationships with their customers. Several mentioned having customer relationships turn into close friendships.

**Passion.** The act of quilting needs fabric and often results in leftover-over fabric deemed a "stash." Due to the great quantity of some quilters' stashes, some quilters have been deemed quiltaholics and fabricholics (Stalp, 2007). Fabric stashes are surprisingly not used as much as it should be based on observations of outsiders (Doyle, 1998). Interestingly enough, when starting a new project, many quilters do not go to their stash first, but rather go buy all new fabric by visiting quilt shops (Doyle, 1998; Stalp, 2006b). The quilt shop owners interviewed were just as passionate about their business and their fabrics as the "addict" quilter.

Carrie feels extreme passion for the love of quilting. She remembers the emotional ties to her quilting mentor. She feels so strongly that she hopes that she is giving this part of her to her customers. Carrie stated:

You know I love it because I'm passionate. I think you must be passionate, I think that it is a business and I feel very strongly that we're in this for profit, and that we can't do this as a charity or a nonprofit but you cannot ignore the emotions that go with it. I did not start quilting with lack of emotions, I have emotional ties to the person who taught me to quilt even though she's been gone 15 years this spring. Every day I can get emotional about what those relationships that are built in quilting mean to me and I hope that I'm giving some of that back to my customers. So yes, we sometimes get a little disgruntled with the customer who's always asking for a discount or whatever you know, there's things that can be frustrating but there's so much reward in sharing that passion that I have with others that I hope that I can do that every day because it does mean something to me at the end of the day.

Jill who worked in public service for many years was very excited about working with quilters. During her public service days, she was often verbally accosted. With the quilters, this doesn't happen. They were always happy when they came in the quilt shop. She enjoyed working with the happy customers. Jill stated:

Basically, I laugh and say you know never had a pissed off quilter come in. Quilters you know just doesn't happen and the thing of it is if we have made a mistake we'll bend over backwards to fix it. So, it's just good people, friendly people into a happy place.

Paula opened her shop because she was so passionate about quilts and quilters. She does not feel like she is at work at all because she gets to deal with so many happy quilters. This



provides her with a very welcoming environment for her customers to enter when shopping in her quilt shop. Paula stated:

No, I mean I just I love it. I do love it; it's just been the funnest thing I've ever done and I've done all kinds things of in my life. But this has just been absolutely such enjoyment. I walk in here every day and I'm always just so happy to be in here so I guess I would if you were going to do it. That is what you want to think up to yourself that you could spend all day there and still come back the next day and be happy about it and be happy to help people. I've only had two customers in my 15 months that have walked in that have been you know problematic. Everybody else has just been, I just love quilters, they are sweet people and they normally love, somebody else is why they are doing this so they are nice, nice people can't ask for any better.

Passion is very important to think about when starting your own business according to Ruth. She feels that this is something you are going to do for many years, day after day and you need to be sure you will be happy. If you are not passionate about your business, your customers will not be passionate either and the business will suffer. Ruth stated:

Make sure it's your passion you're going into because if it isn't you're not going to enjoy getting up every morning and going to work. Do you feel like you're getting up every morning and going to work or are you getting up and going to play? I'm getting up and going to play and I still enjoy it.

Erin enjoys her shop and has all of the luxuries of home at her disposal. She is passionate about quilting and goes as far to call her customers her friends. Erin stated:

I don't consider this work. I really don't, I mean I'm doing exactly what I would do at home except I, you know maybe a friend will pop in, I help them out. Look at my back

room, I have microwave, and a TV. I have everything it's just like home you know...Oh my gosh, the freedom to get to do what I love. You know I mean how many people really can do that anymore? Not a lot. I mean I walk around here with my slippers on. I'm known as the quilt shop lady who wears slippers because it's like you're welcome in my house.

Quilters not only have a passion for quilting, they are also very passionate about the fabrics they choose for their projects. Many of the shop owners mentioned their passion for the fabrics they carry in their respective shops. Janet said that she loved buying and working with fabric:

"I love, I love fabric. I love seeing it. Feeling it. Touching it. Looking at it."

Heather agrees with Janet in that choosing the fabrics that their store will carry is extremely important. There are many vendors and types of fabrics to choose from and each quilt shop owner has their own individual freedom of choice as to what to carry. Heather stated:

The fabric that we get to pick out. We choose every single bolt that comes here. If I see something, I get to make the final decision although I share that with the girls that work here. And then I think, wouldn't that look nice? Something made out of that.

Abby loves the fabrics as well and considers her quilt shop to be her leisure time. She is very passionate about the choices she makes for her customers. Abby stated:

I said I love fabric I'm constantly thinking about it, a big chunk of it I mean I consider my leisure time. I consider you know you might call it work here but then in my leisure time I think of sewing as a leisure activity it's not you know.

Quilters are very passionate about their hobby and quilt shop owners are no different, the shop owners are very passionate about their shops and the fabrics they carry. They are also

passionate about the customers. The customers come into their shops and are happy and want to be there to look, touch and pick out fabrics for their projects. Shop owners love to talk with the quilters about what they are working on and to offer suggestions as to how to create their quilting project.

### **Summary**

This qualitative study examined the entrepreneurship of quilt shop owners in rural communities in the state of Iowa. The study was created using information obtained from the semi structured interviews to explore how the quilt shop owners started and maintained their business.

Analysis of the data indicated that the quilt shop owners are similar to other entrepreneurs in that they were either pulled or pushed into opening their quilt shops. Another theme that was attained from the data was that the quilt shop entrepreneurs found happiness through their quilt shop ownership.

## **CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION**

### **Overview of the study**

By offering rich, thick descriptions of 15 quilt shop owners in rural communities in Iowa, this study presents an in-depth investigation into why and how quilt shop entrepreneurs were able to run their business. The quilt shop owners used different strategies to attract and maintain their customer base, and the entrepreneurs were pulled or pushed into opening their shops. The major pull areas that emerged from analysis of the interviews were opportunity, independence, challenge/achievement, and money. The major push reasons that emerged were family matters and job related reasons. Most of the quilt shop owners were not just pulled or pushed into entrepreneurship, but rather concurrently pulled by one or more of the factors, and pushed by one or more of the factors.

Quilt shop owners also described their businesses as happy places to work and visit. During the interviews, they discussed how much happier they had become compared to when they worked for someone else. There were three main areas related to happiness including: customers, relationships and passion for the shops and the fabrics.

### **Findings**

#### **Pull and Push Factors**

The relationship between the pull and push factors is not always clear. As reported by Dawson & Henley (2012) many women entrepreneurs have multiple reasons for starting their own business. The quilt shop entrepreneurs that were interviewed had many reasons as to how they were pulled into entrepreneurship including: opportunity, independence, challenge/achievement, and money (Kirkwood, 2009). Participants in this study all indicated that they all had the opportunity to open their quilt shops in the rural communities in which they lived

in or lived nearby. Independence was the next important area mentioned with approximately two-thirds of the participants relating that they wanted to be independent of an employer. Challenge and achievement were not the primary drivers of starting their business, but were encountered by most of the quilt shop owners. Each of the entrepreneurs mentioned the importance of money, but clearly stated that it was not the most important satisfaction or success factor.

The research on opportunity being a pull factor in starting a business is very broad (Dawson & Henley, 2012). Most researchers observed that entrepreneurs look to start a business to fill a gap in the market place (Amit & Muller, 1995). The quilt shop entrepreneurs interviewed talked about opportunity often in the realm of finding an available building or space for their business. Many talked about searching out an area that they thought would be prosperous for them, some had connections with the owners of the buildings, and others found buildings once they realized their aspirations of quilt shop ownership. Independence was the second most important pull factor for the quilt shop entrepreneurs. The literature states that entrepreneurs want to be independent of an employer or the rules that must be followed (Harms et. al., 2014). In rural communities, limited opportunities for employment exist and this heightens the desire to work independently of an employer. The quilt shop entrepreneurs were no different than the literature (Schjoedt & Shaver, 2007). They wanted to be free to run their business how they saw fit and not to have to answer to anyone.

Challenge and achievement as viewed by Buttner & Moore (1997) is the third pull factor observed with the quilt shop owners. There were only two quilt shop owners that felt they had a major challenge and achievement to getting their shops open and running. They needed the confidence to go forward with the opening of the shop and found that support in their families.

Money as stated by Kirkwood (2009) was the fourth pull factor, which was important to each quilt shop entrepreneur, but was not the predominant factor in deciding to start their own business.

Push factors for the quilt shop entrepreneurs included family and job related factors which were included in the literature by Kirkwood (2009). According to Hodges et al. (2015) the push factors of family was found for many of the quilt shop entrepreneurs with job related factors being a push for some while deciding to open their own businesses (Dawson & Henley, 2012; Hughes, 2003).

The push factor of family was strong with many of the quilt shop owners, but the reasons were slightly different. Some of the participants replied that they started their business so that they would have more time to spend with children, grandchildren, parents and other activities. Other quilt shop entrepreneurs felt pushed by family members, mostly their spouses to start their quilt shop ownership. Some of the entrepreneurs were pushed into starting their own business by job related factors. Some did not want to work for corporate America ever again, some were laid off and could not find adequate employment in their rural communities. Still others were dissatisfied with the way their positions were run by their employers. Overall, due to job issues, many of the entrepreneurs wanted to work for themselves.

This research contributes to the body of literature that defines pull and push factors in entrepreneurship (Kirkwood, 2009). The literature shows different aspects of pull and push factors for entrepreneurship (Dawson & Henley, 2012). I have determined that finding a building is a pull for an opportunity in a rural quilt shop setting. This finding adds to the body of literature. Also, when it comes to being pushed by family, there are two different thought processes. The first would be family motivating you into the business, and the second would be

wanting to be with your family, thus serving as great motivation for working for oneself. These qualities seem to be rural community related when these quilt shop owners were looking for a place to open their business. Many of the participants in the study were both pulled and pushed at the same time, leading to multiple reasons why they started their own business in their respective rural communities. This research shows how blurred the lines are between pull and push factors of business startup (Dawson & Henley, 2012). The factors that drive them may be seen differently depending on how they approach their work/life balance.

### **Happiness**

Entrepreneurship and happiness are important topics when thinking about starting a business (Pofeldt, 2014). The quilt shop entrepreneurs in this study believed that they were happy with their lives even though they were very busy. By having their own business, they could run the business how they wanted and be able to spend more time with their customers and families. There were three areas that the quilt shop owners discussed in great length based on their happiness: customers, developing relationships, and passion.

The customers are one of the most important parts of the business itself and become a big part of the day for all of the quilt shop entrepreneurs. The customers provided the owners not only with their living, but added a valuable part to their lives by providing them happiness as well as creative outlets. When customers come into their shops, the shop owners did whatever they could to make the customer happy and keep the customer happy.

According to the quilt shop owners, relationships that were formed with the customers were as valuable as the business itself. The customers traveled to the shops, sometimes from as far away as 60 miles away, even though there were closer stores. The relationships that were formed were spoken of as friendships and were very valuable to the quilt shop owner. Regular

customers are valued much more than the casual customer because they are repeat visitors and bring new friends into the relationship (McIlroy & Barnett, 2000).

Quilt shop owners are very passionate about quilting and providing products and services for their customers. There are many kinds of fabrics available to purchase, and every quilt shop owner interviewed was very passionate about the types of fabrics they carried. They know what their customers want and stock their shops based on customer tastes. Quilters are tactile artists and want to see, touch and feel the fabrics that they want to purchase. The shop owners have a great deal of energy and drive when it comes to the customers that frequent the quilt shops. The quilters are happy people when entering the shops, and the shop owners are excited to have them visit their shops and are willing to help them pick out what is needed for their current project.

General systems theory can contribute an explanation of how the quilt shop owner's happiness is generated. General systems theory is based on relationships of the parts to the whole. There are three elements involved in systems theory: input, throughput, and output (Lovingood & Firebaugh, 1978). The input in this study is the pull factors including opportunity, independence, challenge and achievement, and money, and the push factors include family and job related issues. The throughput would be the quilt shop itself, and the output is the happiness factors including customers, relationships and passion. The feedback loop goes from the happiness of the quilt shop owners back to the pull and push factors of entrepreneurship. (Figure 4)

The input of the pull and push factors of entrepreneurs could enter into the throughput of quilt shop ownership independently or with other factors at any time. An example, there could be the pull factor of independence blended with the push factor of job related reasons. The output factors of the systems theory include customers, relationships and passion for the business. These



factors are not necessarily independent of each other; they can occur individually or simultaneously. General systems theory helps to define and diagram the phenomena of quilt shop entrepreneurship.

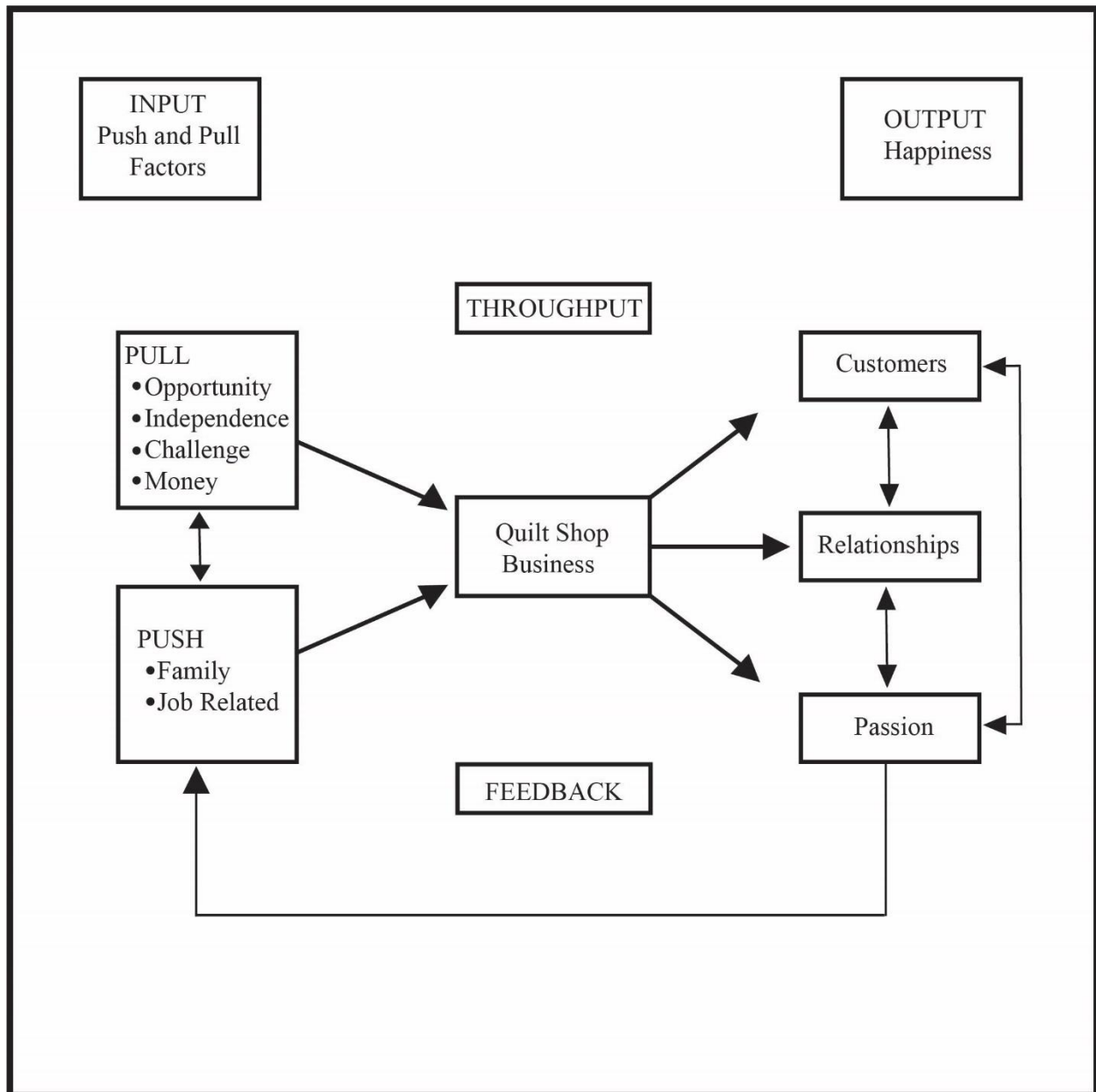


Figure 4. General Systems Theory for Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The study of quilt shop entrepreneurs in small rural communities in the state of Iowa has implications for rural economic development in the state. The communities that were visited were not all thriving. The quilt shop owners were doing what they could for their shops and providing support to the community. The entrepreneurs were using different strategies to enhance their businesses. The present study holds implications for entrepreneurs as they consider the pull and push factors in business start-up. The study also adds to the body of literature based on the happiness experienced in owning a business. The primary goal of this research was to understand how a niche market like quilting can become a viable or meaningful business in a rural community in Iowa.

Strategy is very important to consider when looking at quilt shop entrepreneurship in small rural communities in Iowa. The shop owners talked about using the internet to create websites and Etsy shops to help make their shops profitable. They discussed ways to involve the community in projects that gets children and parents involved in the business. Promotions are a big driving factor to help bring customers into the quilt shops. The diversity in services offered helps the quilt shop owner make ends meet by offering other goods and services in their shops.

The pull factors in the order of importance to the quilt shop entrepreneurs in this study included: opportunity, independence, challenge/achievement, and money (Kirkwood, 2009). The quilt shop entrepreneurs were all interested in the opportunity to open their shop in a small town with the majority of the shops located on a town square or main street, although two shop owners chose to open their shops as an add on to their homes. The most important opportunity in the small towns was if a suitable building was available to start their business. Small rural communities do not have as much availability for buildings so that is the first thing they looked

for when starting their business. While visiting the small towns, the researcher noticed that there were buildings in different levels of disrepair and some appeared to be vacant. Perhaps the town's government bodies could help the community revitalize by assisting building owners in maintaining their property, making it more attractive for customer business. Shop owners were also interested in opening their business on their own terms, not having a boss to answer to and expressing a wish to be independent. A significant finding was that none of the quilt shop owners were pulled by money to open their quilt shops. They all had realistic goals where money was concerned. They were starting the business for themselves and their passions towards fabrics and quilting. To benefit the small-town entrepreneur, local extension offices, in conjunction with the Small Business Association (SBA), could offer programs or seminars to teach them what to expect regarding opening a small business. These programs or seminars would provide realistic expectations regarding entrepreneurship, with the aim of helping rejuvenate the small rural communities in Iowa.

The push factors in this study included: family, and job related reasons (Kirkwood, 2009). The quilt shop entrepreneurs were split on the issue of the family where the shop was concerned. Some of the quilt shop owners wanted to open their own shops so that they could spend more time with their children, grandchildren and parents. On the other hand, quilt shop owners were pushed by a spouse or child to enter into the business for various reasons. Job related reasons ranged from not wanting to work for someone else, losing a job, or retirement. There were many different reasons the shop owners were pushed into owning their own business.

In previous literature, it was reported that being pulled into entrepreneurship was largely viewed as a positive aspect and being pushed into entrepreneurship was largely viewed as a negative aspect (Kirkwood, 2009). This study shows that the lines were blurred between pull and

push, with positive and negative aspects. For example, some of the quilt shop owners were pushed by the desire to spend more time with their families. This became a positive push factor of their business. This information could be used as a guideline for assisting women when thinking of starting their own business, whether it be pulled (positive reasons) or pushed (negative reasons). The quilt shop owners seemed to be content being pulled and pushed into entrepreneurship because they were happy with the choices they had made.

Happiness was another aspect that was derived from discussions with the quilt shop entrepreneurs. The literature has indicated that entrepreneurs are generally happier than individuals that work for someone else (Pofeldt, 2014). This was certainly the case for the quilt shop entrepreneurs. This study indicated three areas that the entrepreneurs were very happy about: customers, relationships, and passion. The entrepreneurs enjoyed the customers that came into their shops because the customers were there by choice and were happy to be there to shop. The quilt shop owners also formed positive relationships with their customers by welcoming them into their shops and talking with them about quilting and other projects they were working on. There were even meetings within the shops where the customers and owners visited about their art over meals. Passion for the art of quilting was the final subtheme within happiness. The quilt shop owners talked frequently about how much they loved every aspect of the shop from the customers, relationships and bonds they formed with the regular customers. Entrepreneurs that are passionate about their particular interest area could gain from this information. The potential for happiness through customers, relationships, and nurturing a passion, may help encourage nascent entrepreneurs into beginning a business, and thus encourage greater rural development.

The benefits of owning and operating a store in a rural community could be encouraged through promotional materials highlighting success stories. The greater the number of businesses, the greater the potential customer base, and the more potential for main street revitalization.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study was limited to semi-structured, in-depth interviews with fifteen quilt shop entrepreneurs in rural, small communities in the state of Iowa. Although Iowa has many quilt shops in small towns, only a limited number of individuals were interviewed. This is a small representation of the population and the study would do well to consider the possibility of there being quilt shops in some of the other 490 rural communities in Iowa with populations of less than 1,500 residents. The study itself could be extended to different settings such as quilt shops in larger communities, urban areas, and states outside of Iowa, to investigate the motivations of quilt shop entrepreneurs. Quilt shop entrepreneurs in other countries could also be interviewed to better understand the motivations of opening a business in different cultures other than the United States. Those interviewed in this study were all female except for one participant speaking on behalf of his deceased wife, so the study could be extended to male quilt shop owners to understand their unique perspectives regarding quilt shop ownership and happiness that they find in ownership.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **Entrepreneur Community Research:**

When a quilt shop entrepreneur is considering starting a business in a small rural community, there are some things to consider within the local community.

- Examine the local community, including small business development centers and chambers of commerce for services offered to entrepreneurs.
- Identify available spaces and buildings that may house the shop.

- Look for availability of local grants for refurbishing of older buildings?
- Is the community thriving? Why or Why not?
- Identify the size of community, examining the immediate proximity as well as driving distance to larger towns.
- Ascertain the proximity to other quilt shops. Closeness to other quilt shops may not be a negative, but rather may drive greater numbers of customers to the shop.

### **Entrepreneurial Readiness:**

When a quilt shop entrepreneur decides to start their own business, there are things to consider regarding their readiness for business ownership.

- Develop a business plan with assistance from fellow small business owners. Many of the quilt shop owners discussed creating the business plan before visiting with their bankers.
- Consider the support system available and necessary for entrepreneurship success.
- Mentors may be very helpful, both within and outside of the local community.
- Identify the factors pushing and pulling oneself into entrepreneurship.
- Consider the pros and cons of entrepreneurship versus employment with someone else.

### **The Entrepreneurship Venture:**

When opening a quilt shop there are many products and services to think about.

- Research the wants and needs of local quilters regarding classes, fabrics and notions.
- Ascertain the community wants and needs for additional services, such as a retreat center, sewing machine sales, or long-arm quilting services.

### **Community Offerings**

Rural communities could provide incentives and support to new entrepreneurs to help them establish their business. In doing so this will provide the mentorship and support a new business owner needs. The following are things that the community could offer the new entrepreneur.

- Involve local chamber of commerce in new business ventures.
- Maintain the towns infrastructure such as road and sidewalk maintenance.
- Work with business owners to revive existing main street buildings.
- Provide advertising for the new business such as highway signs.
- Provide tax breaks for new businesses.

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## APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board  
Office for Responsible Research  
Vice President for Research  
1138 Pearson Hall  
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207  
515 294-4566  
FAX 515 294-4267

**Date:** 3/10/2016

**To:** Jody Aultman  
08 MacKay

**CC:** Dr. Sara Marcketti  
1060 LeBaron hall

**From:** Office for Responsible Research

**Title:** Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs

**IRB ID:** 16-098

**Study Review Date:** 3/10/2016

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

**Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form.** A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed**. For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Demographics:**

1. Please state your age.
2. What are your town, state and country of origin?
3. What is your training related to quilt making and education?
4. Where is your business located? Can you talk about the town?
5. What year did you start your business?

### **Background and Interests:**

6. When and how did you first get interested in quilting?
7. With the shop opening, do you still find time to quilt for yourself?
8. If so, about how much time would you say you spend creating your own quilts?
9. Are you active in any organizations relating to quilting/ crafting?
10. What are some things that inspire you and help you be creative?

### **Business Start Up and Work/Life Balance:**

11. What made you decide that this was the time to start your business?
12. Who influenced you in this decision and how?
13. How do you see this business fitting into and enriching your life?
14. How many hours a day do you work?
15. How do you maintain work/life balance?
16. What are some of the benefits/sources of enjoyment from this business?
17. What are some of the challenges associated with the business?  
     Prompt: family, friends, finances
18. In what ways, does having a business compete with or help your own quilting?
19. In what ways does your family offer their support to your own personal quilting?
20. In what ways does your family offer support in your business?  
     Prompts: time, money, support, space

### **Business Strategies:**

21. Can you talk about the steps you took to open the business?  
     Prompts: Sole proprietorship?  
         Challenges to opening?  
         Funding?  
         Outside advisors?
22. How did you determine your current business location?
23. How many employees work for your quilt shop and in what capacity?



24. Can you talk about the products and services that you offer in your quilt shop?
25. Do you attend industry gatherings such as quilt market and quilt shows? If so, please describe them.
26. What classes do you offer in your business?  
     Prompt: How did you decide on what classes to offer?  
     Who teaches your classes?  
     How many teachers do you have and does this number change over time?
27. Who is your target customer?
28. How do you reach out to this target customer?  
     Prompts: marketing, social media,
29. Do you have a network of resources such as family, friends, employees, mentors, etc., that you rely on to help maintain the growth of your business? If so, who and why?
30. Please estimate the amount of time you spend designing quilts, in the process of creating quilts, marketing, advertising, and selling?
31. What strategies do you employ to keep old customers, to get new customers?
32. What type of growth has your business seen? What helped impact this?
33. What are you doing to promote growth now?
34. How would you define success with your business? Have you achieved it?
35. What would you like to be doing in 5 years with your business?
36. If you could give advice to people on opening a business, what is the one thing you would want to tell them?

**Niche Market:**

37. Do you agree with the following definition or how would you define a niche market?  
     Webster's Dictionary describes a niche as a recessed space or hollow; specifically a recess in a wall for a statue or the like, any position specifically adapted to its occupant. A niche market is a specific part of the market that contains a special characteristic that targets a small percentage of the population.
38. Does your quilt shop utilize a niche market strategy? Why? How?
39. If yes, what effects has a niche strategy had on your company?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss with me about quilt shop ownership?

Is there anyone else you think I could contact for my study?

## **APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT**

**Title of Study:** Quilt Shop Entrepreneurs

**Investigator:** Jody Aultman

This form describes a research project. It has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Research studies include only people who choose to take part—your participation is completely voluntary. Please discuss any questions you have about the study or about this form with the project staff before deciding to participate.

### **Introduction:**

The primary goal of this research is to obtain information on the entrepreneurial success of quilt shop owners. The secondary goal of this research is to investigate the spouses of quilters as to how they feel and interact with the quilters business and hobby of quilting. The data collected from the interviews will be used to determine themes related to quilting and quilt shop owners. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a quilt shop owner or the spouse of a quilt shop owner. You should not participate if you feel that any part of this study would make you feel uncomfortable.

### **Description of Procedures:**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sit in a comfortable area and answer some questions about your quilt shop business. In separate interviews, spouses will be asked questions surrounding the quilting habits of the quilt shop owners. Your participation will last for one session that will last 1 -2 hours.

### **Risks or Discomforts:**

There are no know risks or discomforts associated with this interview.

### **Benefits:**

If you decide to participate in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by creating knowledge of quilt shop entrepreneurs and how spouses feel about their quilter's habits.

### **Costs and Compensation:**

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

### **Participant Rights:**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions *about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury*, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu), or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

### **Confidentiality:**

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality the following measures will be taken: The subjects will be assigned a code name which will be used on forms and in writing instead of their names. Any other identifying details obtained in the course of an interview or observation will be altered to protect confidentiality. All data gathered will be kept in a password coded computer file. The person who will have access to the individual data and/or summarized data is the author of the project.

All interviews will be recorded and then transcribed by the author. The interviews will be kept separate from the consent forms. The recorded interviews will be destroyed 6 month after the completion of the project.

### **Questions:**

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information *about the study*, contact Jody Aultman ([jaultman@iastate.edu](mailto:jaultman@iastate.edu)) or Dr. Sara Marcketti ([sbb@iastate.edu](mailto:sbb@iastate.edu))

### **Consent and Authorization Provisions:**

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date